



# RISING TIDE

A collection of Pacific poems  
about human rights and  
social justice







# *Rising Tide*

**A collection of Pacific poems about human rights  
and social justice**

**Edited by Dr Francis Mangubhai  
Suva, Fiji, 2020**



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## About the Anthology

This publication is one of the outcomes of a social citizenship education programme for school children carried out by the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) of the Pacific Community (SPC). The SCE programme is funded by the European Union. As part of the programme, RRRT requested Dr Francis Mangubhai, the notable Fiji-born educator and researcher in applied linguistics, to compile this anthology of Pacific poetry. The anthology covers topics such as gender equality, social inclusion and justice, and ending violence against women. It was compiled from a range of submissions from across the Pacific region and is suitable for students in Years 7–13.

The primary purpose of this collection of Pacific poetry is to introduce the reader to certain ideas that have a significant effect upon Pacific communities. The effects are felt in our social lives, our daily lives and, in most if not all cases, they will be felt by future generations. Pacific countries are, by and large, too small to have any significant effect on the world economy, but they can be epitomes of just and free societies, happiness and contentment. To achieve this, we must strive to be fair and just in our dealings with each other, respecting and promoting the rights of people to reach their full potential.

Like everywhere else in the world, changes are occurring in our Pacific communities. It is for this reason this collection of poems has been given the title *Rising Tide*. One obvious meaning of the title is the rising tide due to climate change – and that is a social justice issue in which Pacific communities lead the world. But *Rising Tide* is an expression that is also used metaphorically: there is a rising tide of change occurring in our societies, including changes related to equality, inclusion, and ending violence against women. You, who will be the next generation of adults, can, through your attitudes, values and voices, contribute to this rising tide of change. Mahatma Gandhi once said, “you must be the change you wish to see in the world”. To bring about change in your communities, in attitudes, in behaviour, *you* must also undergo and model this change.

### A guide to using this anthology

The selected poems have been arranged into two sections of junior secondary and senior secondary, and four subsections respectively:

1. Equality, non-discrimination, treating people fairly and equally
2. Inclusion, being inclusive, respecting diversity of people and viewpoints
3. Addressing violence against women, protecting marginalised people
4. Social justice more broadly, including nuclear justice and climate justice.



There is a glossary at the back to help you understand some of the key concepts and vocabulary around human rights and social inclusion and a simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While going through these poems, the emphasis should not be on right or wrong answers. In poetry it is more important to grasp what the main ideas are, what the message is, what feelings are created, and to appreciate the beauty of the language in which all three are conveyed. To appreciate the full effect of language, poetry should be read aloud, something the oral traditions in our communities have made natural. Hence, read and recite, respond to the ideas and feelings in the poems, and – more importantly – reflect upon them.

*At the heart of the salient issues these poems highlight is the question of justice and fairness and, consequently, the matter of the rights and dignity of individuals, communities and of societies.*

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The SCE programme aims to enhance Pacific youth's formal in-school and informal education on gender equality and prevention of violence against women and girls. The Pacific Partnership is funded primarily by the European Union, with targeted support from the governments of Australia and New Zealand and cost-sharing with UN Women; and has three outcome areas jointly coordinated by SPC RRRT, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (Forum Secretariat) and UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office.



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Thanks are due also to the artists whose artworks complement and enhance the mood of the poems.

The publishers are grateful to the following for permission to reproduce their poems in this anthology. The copyright of all the materials printed from publications belongs to the publishers and to the authors, whose permission we gratefully acknowledge.

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***Nilesh Goundar***

Programme Manager

Pacific Partnership to End Violence against Women and Girls Programme





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## Foreword

Decades of mobilising by civil society, human rights groups and women's movements have moved human rights challenges and ending violence against women and children to the top of national and international agendas.

The trend continues to gather momentum, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Pacific governments, local communities, faith-based organisations, youth, men and boys, all of whom are increasingly and emphatically saying no to violence against women and girls.

Only when all our voices come together is it possible to challenge the historical power imbalances and effect lasting change.

This anthology brings together Pacific poets and artists to express their voice on issues around human rights, gender equality, violence against women and girls and social justice including climate justice.

These artists have used their unique talents to generate powerful statements that connect readers and listeners to experiences of rights being enjoyed, denied or defended in the themes of violence against women and girls, social inclusion and justice.

The collection is a testimony to and recognition of the many survivors and victims of human rights violations and social injustices in the Pacific. It is both inspirational and therapeutic, providing a voice for those who have been rendered silent, and helping us imagine a more just and peaceful future.

I commend this work and hope it will inspire more organisations, communities and individuals to add their voices to the ever-growing call for a more inclusive, stronger and empowered Pacific.

***Dr Audrey Aumua, Deputy Director General, Pacific Community (SPC)***



**T**his is a special collection of poetry and artworks from the Pacific Islands. The collection makes a unique and timely contribution to school curriculum texts for several reasons. First, it features works around the critical area of human rights and social justice – a difficult and resource-scarce area of study. Teachers will especially welcome this addition, as it provides creative learning opportunities for students to critique both poetry and visual art.



Second, the selection of older and new poems by seasoned and emerging writers brings together a cross-generational narrative of Pacific stories of struggle and survival. It is equally significant that art is included in this collection as each image speaks to a story of its own, on which students of all ages can ponder and relate to. The artworks featured in this anthology are by Pacific Island artists from Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands. They include paintings, photography and digital art.

For many students, it will be an introduction to the safe space that creative expression provides for otherwise difficult or sensitive conversations. For others, it reinforces the critical cultural role that the arts play as sites of knowing and learning. While the primary objective of this collection is to facilitate teaching and learning of human rights and social justice issues in Pacific schools, it achieves a second outcome – that is, creating an awareness of art literacy. Art or artistic literacy refers to a person’s ability to find meaning and connection with works of art. The creative works and activities in this collection present multiple opportunities for students and teachers alike to reflect on their own values and beliefs and to connect with the broader theme of unity and humanity.

For many of the contributors, this will be the first time that their works will be published, and this edition is a testimony to their creativity.

The collection is a tribute to the abundant potential of Pacific Island artists and writers in the islands. I hope it will inspire school students across the Pacific and in the most remote areas to value the arts. They will become the next generation of art activists and creative writers. They will be tasked with sharing the new Pacific stories of their times.

***Dr Frances C. Koya Vaka’uta, Director of the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies, The University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji***



**A**pproaching human rights and social justice in the Pacific as the rising tide of a collection of poems – what a brilliant idea!

Human rights and social justice are two sides of the same coin. Human rights are inherent to all human beings, as proclaimed in the very first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Social justice progresses when barriers faced by people because of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, culture or disability are removed.



Of course, human rights and social justice predated the European Union, but since the European Union was established, it has stood for human rights and social justice, at home and abroad. At home, a charter of fundamental rights is embedded into the treaty establishing the European Union. Social justice is a cornerstone of the European Union, implemented through the principles of cohesion and solidarity.

Abroad, the European Union promotes and defends the universal values of human rights and social justice everywhere in the world. In the Pacific, it is particularly committed to consolidating democracy, improving access to justice, promoting gender equality, eliminating violence against women and girls and protecting the most vulnerable.

In the Blue Pacific, the ocean and the tide are central parts of everyday life, from childhood to old age. They are probably the elements most reflected in the cultures of the peoples of the Pacific, and it does not come as a surprise that they are celebrated in poetry.

Choosing human rights and social justice for poetry stands out as a bold choice. But because poetry does not speak to the body but to the soul, as it is not born from the brain but from the heart, choosing human rights and social justice for poetry is a fantastic choice. This collection of Pacific poems will undoubtedly generate inspiration for the young generation for which it is aimed. This young generation is the rising tide of the Pacific. May this young generation be a new wave for human rights and social justice!

***His Excellency Sujiro Seam, Ambassador of the European Union for the Pacific***



## Human Rights and Social Justice

What are human rights and social justice issues? What does a ‘socially just’ society where everyone enjoys his or her human rights look like? These questions may come to mind as you pick up this book of poetry for the first time.

Social justice is about fair and just relationships between people that uphold our human dignity. It is about peaceful societies where everyone equally enjoys access to well-being, opportunities, justice and resources. More and more, social justice is also linked to ideas of environmental and climate justice, recognising we are all interconnected to the land, ocean and the environment. We therefore need to care for and protect our environment on which our lives depend and which provide our livelihoods if our communities are to continue to develop and prosper.

Human rights are a core component of achieving social justice; they are the basic rights and freedoms that protect us and ensure our basic needs are fulfilled so we can live a decent life. Human rights belong to every person in the world, from birth until death. They recognise our freedom to make choices about our lives and to develop our full potential as human beings. They apply regardless of where we are from, our ethnicity or gender, what we believe or how we choose to live our lives. These rights are based on shared values across our Pacific and global cultures like dignity, fairness, equality, respect and interdependence. They are about living a life free from fear, harassment or discrimination, where our basic needs like water, food and shelter are met, and we live in a clean and safe environment.

Importantly, there are rights of individuals and of communities. And just as we have rights, we also have responsibilities to respect and protect the rights of others. For example, in many of our communities there may be times of the year where the community or its leaders decide that no one should fish from a certain area to allow more fish to grow to benefit the entire community. While we may have a right to fish to feed ourselves, we need to understand and respect the rights of others – in this case, the community as a whole – to enjoy this right. The right thing to do, then, is to respect the community decision – and this decision also helps sustain our ocean environment for our future!

Our governments ultimately have the responsibility to ensure we can enjoy our rights. These rights often are defined and protected by law. Have you ever read your country’s constitution? Have a look and see what rights you are entitled to in your country. Countries also have education laws and policies, which seek to ensure the right of all children to an education. Some countries also have child





protection or welfare laws and policies to ensure you can enjoy your right to a safe and secure childhood.

It is important to talk about justice and human rights because we live in times of great change where not everyone enjoys their rights. You may be hearing more and more about some of the challenges we face as Pacific Islanders, like the climate crisis threatening our countries and communities. You may hear of the changes happening to our environment, like fewer fish in the ocean, less drinking water, more plastic waste making its way into the food we eat. You may learn in school or hear from your elders about the bad effects on people due to the nuclear testing carried out in different parts of the Pacific. You may see or hear on the news, or witness in your communities, widespread violence against women and girls. You may witness many children being bullied or disciplined using corporal punishment in schools. You may see children with disabilities who are not attending school and are kept away from participating in community life. You may see some families struggling to find enough nutritious food to eat. All these issues are to do with justice and human rights.

**Who needs to speak out on these issues?**

**WE ALL DO!**

**Who needs to take action on these issues?**

**WE ALL DO!**

What you do on these issues counts for your families, communities, countries, and our region. Have you heard of Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old girl from Sweden? In August 2018, she initiated the school strike for climate movement in her country. Since then, she has inspired both children and adults across the world in demanding that world leaders take action to address climate change now. Like Greta, there are many Pacific Islander children and youth today who are doing things, big and small, to address social justice issues in their families, communities and countries.

The Pacific Islander poets in this book are all concerned about different social justice issues. They are using the power of words to make us think about these issues, to understand better what is happening around us, and to move us to take action to address these issues.

Their poetry is divided into four broad themes. A brief explanation of each theme is provided below to help you understand further as you read the poems.

## **1. Equality, non-discrimination, treating people fairly and equally**

Everyone deserves to be treated fairly, with equal respect and dignity. This does not mean that we are all the same, but that all of our human rights are the same.



However, sometimes people are treated unfairly just because of their differences; for example, boys and girls get treated differently, people with disabilities are treated less fairly and not included in the same way as those without disabilities, or people make judgements about people using stereotypes – that is, fixed ideas and beliefs about groups of people – based on someone’s race or ethnicity. Just because a child is in a wheelchair does not mean that he or she has fewer rights to access school to enjoy an education. Just because someone is a girl does not mean that she has to behave in a certain way, or do only certain things, or study only certain ‘female-oriented’ subjects at school. This unfair treatment is also called discrimination.

For everyone to enjoy their rights equally, we need to support everyone to have access to the same opportunities. This does not mean that everyone gets the same thing. Instead, it means that we treat people fairly based on their circumstances by providing the support that enables them to enjoy those opportunities also; for example, we support children in wheelchairs to be able to access schools by providing ramps for them alongside steps for others, or we specifically encourage girls to break stereotypes that subjects like science or maths are more suited to boys by studying these subjects if they want.

## **2. Inclusion, being inclusive, respecting diversity of people and viewpoints**

All our Pacific cultures are based on common values of love, respect and inclusion of everyone in the community. Our religious faiths teach us these values as well. Inclusion means that we make sure no one is being left out or left behind. This requires us to respond to the diversity of people’s situations and needs. For example, if there is a group discussion and someone is doing all the speaking while others are silent, this is not being inclusive. To be inclusive we would need to make sure that we encourage the others to also feel free to share their thoughts and viewpoints. Sometimes girls may not feel comfortable to share some of their personal thoughts on some issues in front of boys, and the same may be true for boys in front of girls. That’s okay; we can also sometimes have separate group discussions for boys and for girls so that all can speak freely. Inclusion also means that if there is someone in the group who is deaf, then we make sure there is someone in the group who is using sign language to share what is being spoken, or that someone is writing down what is being spoken so that the person who is deaf can follow and participate in the discussion.

Inclusion also means that we not only allow everyone to participate but also listen to everyone, and respect when people have different ideas and viewpoints to our own. We don’t have to all agree with each other, but we have to respect



other people's right to (respectfully) speak their mind. Often, the best learning comes when we have lots of different ideas and viewpoints to consider, and can then choose what is the best idea.

### **3. Addressing violence against women, protecting marginalised people**

'Marginalised' members of our communities refer to those groups of people who generally do not enjoy access to rights, resources and opportunities on the same level as others, and so may not fully participate in life in our communities. Often, their situation is linked to experiencing discrimination and violence. Hence, some people who are often considered marginalised are women or people with disabilities.

Respect, compassion and protection, especially for marginalised members of our communities, are also core Pacific values. Another way to think about this is that we all have the right to safety and security in our families and communities. No one wants to live in fear that what he or she says or does will result in someone harming him or her. No one wants to feel that he or she is of lesser worth or to be treated without dignity. And everyone has the individual and collective responsibility to respect and protect the right to safety and security of others, especially the more marginalised members of our communities like women, children or our elders.

Neglect, abuse and violence are some of the ways in which we deny another person their right to safety and security. For example, many women in our communities experience violence today at the hands of men, especially in the family. They may be beaten or threatened with harm, or they may have hateful words constantly spoken to them, or they may not be given freedom to move about, or they may not be provided with basic items to care for themselves and their children. All these are examples of violence. Sometimes people even try to justify this violence as caused by the women's actions. However, violence is never acceptable as it denies or goes against the women's right to safety and security. People choose to use violence when instead they could choose to use other non-violent ways to interact with a woman. They choose violence because it shows their power over a woman and reinforces the idea that women do not have equal rights to men; but they are doing wrong. And when we witness violence, especially as children, it is indirectly harming us too. It may affect how we feel about our mothers, sisters and other women or our fathers, or it may make us sad or angry, affecting how we feel about ourselves and disturbing our studies. It is made much worse if we too experience the violence.



There is a growing number of men, women and youth in our communities, in our churches, temples and mosques, and in our governments who are saying this violence must stop. They are speaking up to say that our mothers and sisters deserve respect and dignity, and have equal rights, just like everyone else. We too can join them in making this a reality for all women and marginalised members of our communities.

#### **4. Social justice more broadly, including nuclear justice and climate justice**

Social justice encompasses a broad set of issues like poverty, sustainable development, protection of the environment, and nuclear and climate justice. Each one of these issues is important. We all have the right to a dignified and decent living. No one in our communities and countries should live in poverty where there are enough resources for everyone. At the same time, as our communities and countries develop, we have to ensure we do not overuse our resources so that there is less for people in the future. Take the example mentioned previously of the community restriction on fishing in certain areas at certain times of the year. This is an example of how we can protect our natural resources – fish in this case – so that all our community members can enjoy them well into the future. Other natural resources we need to protect in a similar way include our oceans, lands and forests so that we are not using too much. These resources can also be threatened by large-scale fishing, forestry and mining operations that extract too much and leave too little behind for future generations to enjoy.

Many of you may read about or learn about in school the history of nuclear testing that was done in the Pacific – in French Polynesia, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands – by France, the United Kingdom and the United States. While the nuclear bombs were tested decades ago, their negative effects on people’s health and well-being continue today. Social justice means that we need to consider the rights of those affected people to health, to land (where people can no longer go back to their land where the bombs were tested), and even to life itself. Understanding this history is also important so that we make sure nothing like this is ever allowed to happen again in our region to our people.

Finally, climate justice is something at the forefront of the minds of Pacific leaders and communities. Already we are at the forefront of the climate crisis: you may even have experienced some of the more severe droughts, king tides, cyclones and typhoons, rising sea levels or more frequent floods due to the changing climate that is causing damage and destruction to our communities.



What many youth and adults today are demanding is that all the countries of the world, especially those that have contributed the most to the climate crisis, take action now. The world has to end the use of fossil fuels, like coal, petroleum and natural gas, which contribute significantly to climate change. We have to switch to cleaner, renewable energy like solar and wind power. The world leaders have to take steps to support the initiatives of countries, especially smaller island countries like ours that have contributed little to the changing climate but expected to adapt much to the changes. And we have to stand in solidarity as one region to demand our right to survive with dignity on our island homes.

*These matters I have talked about are the various subjects of the poems you are going to read. As you read the poems, reflect on what the poets are saying and how you could relate their ideas to your own thinking and behaviour. Perhaps the ideas of the poets will stimulate you to write your own poems, expressing your own ideas about social justice and human rights issues. And from there, they may inspire you to take small action to make change happen!*

**Dr Jayshree Mangubhai**

Senior Human Rights Adviser, SPC RRRT

## Reading Poetry: A Brief Introduction

“What is poetry?” One answer, to paraphrase a poet from England, is that it is that which is often thought of or felt by people but never so well expressed as by a poet. Good poets combine thoughts and feelings by their choice of words. Diction (a word for choice and use of words and phrases) is therefore a very important part of the art of the poet (as it is for a songwriter). Traditional songs in Pacific communities are poetry that is sung, and the better the poetry is, the greater the chance that the traditional song will survive through time. Many traditional songs tell a story, and many cultures have used the poetic form to tell their stories. In Western poetry these stories are called ‘ballads’.

The poems in this collection, like traditional songs, should be read aloud. Let the sounds and words work on your thoughts and feelings. For example, read aloud these lines taken from Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner’s poem ‘Dear Matafele Peinam’ and notice how the choice of words create a picture of a lagoon at sunrise:

**I want to tell you about that lagoon  
that lucid, sleepy lagoon  
lounging against the sunrise**

You will enjoy the poems in this collection more if you understand some of the ways that poets try to convey what they think, see or feel. Does the poet address the reader directly, as Teresia Teaiwa does in her poem ‘Mother Earth/Father Sky’?

**Have you ever seen and heard  
A woman stand on the beach  
And wail, wail at the sea and sky?**

Other poets address someone in the poem – sometimes the poet only gives you clues who that person or persons are; other times it might be very direct. Makiuti Tongia’s poem ‘Outcast’ begins with “You”.

As you read the poem you begin to understand who the “you” is.

**You treat me a stranger  
in our father’s house,**

Sometimes, poets seem to be describing someone’s life but are really making a point about kindness or cruelty or acceptance or happiness.



You have to try to understand the purpose or message the poet might want to convey, as in Sia Figiel’s poem, ‘Songs of the fat brown woman’, which begins thus:

**The fat brown woman moves in the breeze  
under the thatch of the small small fale  
braiding sinnet  
weaving stories  
between the leaves of the pandanus**

Sometimes a poet uses a device around which his or her poem is constructed. For example, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner’s poem ‘Dear Matafele Peinam’ (mentioned previously) uses the device of a letter to get her message across about climate change. Sometimes a poet uses ‘I’ in the poem as if it is about the poet herself or himself – be careful not to ascribe the events to the poet’s own life, for it can be based on someone else’s life or experience. It is not necessarily true in the poem ‘Me, the Labourer’ that Eti Sa’aga is speaking of his own life.

In many cases, poets are not simply describing a picture or an event. They have a purpose; they have a message in their writing. Sometimes it comes early in the poem; sometimes you don’t get the message until you are right at the end of the poem. Sometimes the message is explicit (clearly stated); at other times, the message has to be inferred from the poem. In the poem ‘Homecoming’ by Pokwari Kale, the message is not explicit, but you know by the end of the poem that the poet does not approve of all the ‘developments’ that have taken place in his home town. By contrast, in Agnes Dewenis’s poem ‘You Left Your Society to Me’, the last part of the poem makes it clear that the poet wants her daughter to have a better place in her traditional society.

For poets, words are their tools. And there are many different types of tools, depending upon the idea/picture/feeling that the poet wants to convey. We will look at some of these tools, or poetic devices, below. Good poets choose words and phrases that convey not just one idea but, sometimes, multiple ideas and hence give the readers richer and more complex perspectives, such as in this example from Teresia Teaiwa’s poem ‘AmneSIA’:

**and in this ocean  
the stepping stones  
are  
getting real**

‘Stepping stones’ are the means by which one can safely cross a stream or a river, but stepping stones is a phrase used also to describe the situation where people

use other people to get what they want. In addition, a group of islands seen from the sky can seem like stepping stones, so there is another idea in the same phrase. Similarly, “getting real” suggests that something is coming into existence, but it is also an expression suggesting that someone should act or see the real situation and take action. Both meanings are created in this poem. The poet has also used ‘personification’ (see page 14 for more about ‘personification’) by saying that ‘stepping stones’ (inanimate) should get real. In just a few lines the poet has packed in a lot of ideas. Or take the example in Niles Goundar’s poem ‘Those Who Did Not Survive’ where he says towards the end “A life ebbs away”. “Life” can mean the physical life, in which case ebbing away would result in death. But there is another meaning to “life” also: the inner life of a person and its ebbing away would result in a hollow shell of a person. Both meanings are possible and both could occur to an individual.

Wherever you find poets using words unusually, they are doing that deliberately to create a meaning or feeling in the readers/listeners. So when you are reading a poem, be on the lookout for words that seem most appropriate in the context, or very unusual. They are there to make us think, to see something in a new, fresh way.

It is time to look at some poetic devices and to understand how they may contribute to both the meaning of a poem and also to its enjoyment.

## 1. Rhyme and rhythm

A rhyme is repetition of similar sounding words usually at the end of lines in poems. Repeating patterns of sounds bring rhythm or musicality to a poem (as it does to a song) and joy in reciting it. Rhyme has traditionally been very helpful in remembering the words also. Most of the poems in this book have not used rhyming lines but have been written in free verse. Free verse is when the poem does not have a regular meter or rhythm. By contrast, here is an example taken from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, which is a ballad in which a sailing boat on the ocean is not moving because there is no wind. It has a rhyme scheme of ABAB. Read it aloud and notice the rhythm provided by the regular rhyme:

**Water, water, every where,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.**

But rhythm in a poem is also supplied by the choice of words in a line; rhythm





gives the poem its flow and beat. In English, in words with more than one syllable, one of the syllables is pronounced more strongly (called ‘stressed’) than the others (which are ‘unstressed’). Take the word ‘water’ from the extract above. It has two syllables – ‘wa’ and ‘ter’ – and it is the first that is stressed. To see rhythm at work, read the first two lines of this common English nursery song. Read it aloud, stressing the syllables that are underlined. Note the rhythm that is provided by the combination of these particular words:

**Twinkle, twinkle, little star**  
**How I wonder what you are.**

There are different patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables that poets have used. Each pattern has a name, and it is possible that in your regular language or literature class your teacher has introduced them to you. Since regular patterns in lines and stanzas are not a big feature in the poems chosen in this book, it will not be discussed further. Teachers are, however, encouraged to explore this area further with examples taken from non-Pacific and other Pacific poems.

## 2. Alliteration, consonance and assonance

The rhythm of a poem is also helped by the use of these three poetic devices. **Alliteration** is the use of the same first consonant in a number of words following closely together. Here is an example, taken once again from the same Coleridge poem. The ‘f’ sound almost mimics the sound of the wind:

**The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew  
 The furrow followed free;**

Here is an example of **consonance** taken from the poem ‘The Windhover’ by Gerard Manley Hopkins. The use of ‘d’ one after another slows down your reading, thus emphasising each of the words used:

**I caught this morning morning’s minion, king-  
 dom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding  
 [*minion* = favourite; *dauphin* = prince]**

**Assonance** is the repetition of the same vowel sounds in two or more words that are close to each other. Like the other two devices, it adds to the rhythm of the poem. Here is an example from Dylan Thomas’s poem ‘Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night’. Note the repetition of ‘o’, a sound that by itself can sound ‘sad’, and hence very appropriate in a poem that deals with old age and dying:

**Do not go gentle into that good night,  
 Old age should burn and rave at close of day;**

### 3. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which a poet takes an abstract (non-concrete) idea and gives it human qualities. Here is an example from Emily Dickinson's poem 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death':

**Because I could not stop for Death –  
He kindly stopped for me –**

Another example is from Marilyn Tahi's poem 'Violence' in which she turns the abstract noun 'violence' into a living thing and addresses it directly:

**Violence  
You are violent  
You are oppressive  
You are careless**

### 4. Simile and metaphor

These two figures of speech compare one thing to another. The main difference between them is that in a *simile* the comparison is very obvious because it is often signalled by 'like' or 'as'. The *metaphor* uses an indirect comparison and you as a reader have to recognise this. Here are some examples of similes: "words as sweet as ripe mangoes" (from Rebecca Tobo Olul's poem 'I Love You'); "My hands are like broom sticks" from Kumala Tawali's poem 'The Old Woman's Message'. Here is an example of a metaphor taken from Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's poem 'History Project' (a puppet is the metaphor):

**I glance at a photograph  
of a boy, peeled skin  
arms legs suspended  
a puppet**

There are two metaphors in this line from 'Without a Barrier Reef' by Craig Santos Perez: "She is our most vulnerable island, and we are her barrier reef". One is a comparison of 'she' with an island, and the other is the 'we' (who are the parents) who are like a barrier reef protecting an island.

### 5. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. We might say to a person who has been stupid "You are a clever fellow, you are!", but your words convey the exact opposite meaning. Here is an example from Jean Tekura



Mason's poem 'Sunglasses Indoors':

**Sunglasses indoors –  
the badge of your womanhood,  
hides a multitude of sins**

As you read the poem you realise that the sunglasses are not a badge of womanhood, or it could be the badge of only a certain type of womanhood. The poet intends a completely different meaning from what her words seem to say. Similarly, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner in her poem 'History Project' labels the history project as "FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND", which is also what an American general told the people: that the atomic testing done in their country was for the good of mankind. Of course, it was not! And there is a further irony in her poem right at the end in the remarks that one of the judges makes about the project.

## 6. Synecdoche

Synecdoche [pronounced *seenekdeki*, with a stress on the first syllable] is a literary device in which a part of something represents the whole. It may also call a thing by the name of the material it is made of, or it may refer to a thing in a container or packaging by the name of that container or packaging. Konai Helu Thaman in her poem 'My Blood' uses the term 'blood' to represent not only her relatives but also all Tongans (perhaps even all Pacific Islanders).

Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner in her poem 'History Project' uses a synecdoche in these lines:

**I glance at a photograph  
of a boy, peeled skin  
arms legs suspended  
a puppet  
next to a lab coat lost  
in his clipboard**

Here "lab coat" represents a researcher, perhaps from a university, or a doctor in his lab coat. The effect of this is to dehumanise the person, thus suggesting that the person in the lab coat is not affected by the boy with skin damaged by radiation. It is a powerful way to convey that there is lack of care or concern on the part of the person in the lab coat, and it adds to the message that the poet is trying to convey.

## 7. Apostrophe

Apostrophe is a figure of speech in which the poet speaks directly to someone who is not present or is dead or speaks to a non-living object or an idea. In her poem entitled 'Violence', Marilyn Tahi addresses violence as if it is a living thing:

**Violence**

**You are violent**

**You are oppressive**

The well-known children's rhyme 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' is another example, where a star is addressed as if it were a living thing. An apostrophe thus tries to bring abstract ideas or non-living things to life in order to communicate some emotion more effectively.

## 8. Oxymoron

Oxymoron is a figure of speech in which two opposite ideas are used to create an effect, for example, 'sweet sadness', or 'cruel kindness'. Teresia Teaiwa in her poem 'Mother Earth/Father Sky' says in the last line: "The peace of pain and the pain of peace". It makes you stop and think how pain can be peaceful or how there is pain when there is peace.

Sometimes poets use the length of lines in poems to help them convey their meanings more effectively. This is possible particularly in free verse where the line breaks might reflect a pause, a completion or a way of emphasis, as Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner does in her poem 'History Project':

**I flip through snapshots  
of american marines and nurses branded  
white with bloated grins sucking  
beers and tossing beach balls along  
our shores**

Here, by putting the words "our shores" on a separate line, she emphasises who the shores belong to and hence highlights the contrast with the American marines and nurses, whose behaviour seems to suggest that they own everything. In reading a poem, whenever you get an unusual line length, pause and ask yourself why the poet has done that. It is usually for a reason, to create a particular effect. You will find further examples of this in Jetñil-Kijiner's poem 'Crash' also.



Many poets also see the actual page on which poems are written as aids to creating richer meanings in their poems. So Jasmine Navala Waleafea in her poem ‘Equally Human’ spells the title with a space between each letter, to emphasise the meaning of the phrase. She uses the same technique at the end of the poem for the purpose of emphasis. Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner in her poem ‘Fishbone Hair’ emphasises how all the hair fell out of her niece’s head by spreading each word over the page, thus reflecting what actually happened to her niece’s hair.

This collection of poetry also has a few **haikus**. A *haiku* is a very short form of Japanese poetry in three lines. Its effectiveness comes from both its form and its particular focus. A traditional haiku has five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the last. It focuses on one brief moment of time, uses ‘provocative’, colourful images, and provides a sudden moment of illumination (i.e. deeper understanding).

Here is a haiku written by Matsuo Bashō, a famous Japanese poet:

**In the twilight rain  
these brilliant-hued hibiscus –  
a lovely sunset.**

The focus of this poem is the “lovely sunset”, but notice what Bashō describes beforehand: it is not just any rain, but “twilight” rain, and then the beautiful coloured hibiscus. It is almost like a photograph of a moment. (Try to put yourself into the picture created by this poet.) And you can check for yourself whether it has the right number of syllables for each line.

Here is another haiku written by a writer, Paul Holmes:

**Picking up pebbles  
Or seashells strewn on soft sand  
Pure relaxation**

Notice how he creates a picture in the first two lines, and then the comment or insight he wants to convey in the third line.

As you look at the poems in this book and you are moved by some of them, try to capture the feeling in a haiku. Perhaps you can do this activity as a class when an opportunity arises.

*The poet's job, as was said right at the beginning, is to say the things you might have thought about or felt but could never find the right words or combinations of them. Read these poems aloud and let the poets do their job on you – to understand the ideas, the messages and the feelings conveyed in their poems, and then to reflect upon what the poet says to you personally.*

**Dr Francis Mangubhai**



Nikki Mariner © 2018, Samoa  
Daughters Say Me Too  
Medium: Acrylic on canvas

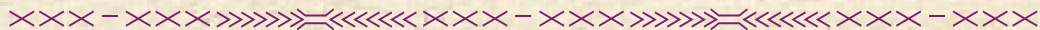


# Junior Secondary Poems





Katherine Vaka'uta © 2019, Fiji  
Childlike Innocence  
Medium: Digital art



# SECTION 1

**Equality, Non-Discrimination, Treating People Fairly and Equally**





## **E-Q-U-A-L-L-Y H-U-M-A-N**

«-» *Jasmine Navala Waleafea* »-»

I am a girl  
You are a boy  
But we are both humans  
She is a woman  
He is a man  
Both human  
A girl grows into a woman  
A boy grows into a man  
Older, yet still humans  
Whether I am a girl  
You are a boy  
She is a woman  
And he is a man  
We are all humans  
And Humans  
A girl, a boy, a woman or a man  
Must be treated  
E-Q-U-A-L-L-Y



## Thinking about the poem

1. This is a visual poem, starting with the heading. How do you think the poet uses space on the page to emphasise her message in this poem? [Think of paragraph space and length of pause between them, especially if one is reading aloud.]
2. How does the use of hyphens in the title and the last line contribute to the message that the poet is trying to get across?
3. Why do you think the poet uses a lot of repetition in this poem?
4. In one or two sentences say what the message in this poem is.





## My Life

*E.K.*

I live a life of fear  
Fear of being yelled at  
Fear of being sworn at  
Fear of being called names  
Fear of being hit.

Did I say the right thing?  
Did I cook the food right?  
Is the house clean enough?  
Am I dressed right?  
Should I have bought that?

Maybe I should have done it another way  
Maybe I should have cooked soup instead of stew  
Maybe I shouldn't have worn this skirt  
Maybe, just maybe if I hadn't said that  
I wouldn't have to worry.

How long is this going to go on for?  
All these thoughts tormenting me  
Anticipating, planning, agonising, dreading ...  
Why must I always have to  
WORRY  
DREAD  
FEAR  
Is this really my life?



## Thinking about the poem

1. Poets don't always tell you clearly 'who is speaking in the poem', 'what the message is' or 'why things have been said'. They like to involve you in the language so that you become a part of the poet's thinking – part of making meaning in a poem. So, who do you think the "I" in the poem is? How can you tell?
2. Look at the punctuation in the first two stanzas (a 'stanza' is a group of lines with a gap between to separate one group of lines from the next). Why do you think they are different? [Think of how we read aloud; what do we do when we come to a full stop or a question mark? How would you describe the thoughts that are going through the mind of the "I" in the poem?]
3. What words sum up what the feelings of "I" in the poem are?
4. What answer do you think the poet is hoping for in the last line?
5. Is it fair or right that the "I" has a life full of fear? How can this life change?





## Violence Against Women

*Betty Arthur*

Women are not slaves  
To be kicked on the bottom  
or dragged on the floor  
Women are the same as men

Women should have some freedom  
and enjoy themselves like men  
Women are not animals  
to be kept in the house  
all the time as in a fence

Women do everything  
to please their husbands  
and still, men want to be the boss  
Why should there be differences  
when women are the same as men



## Thinking about the poem

1. What words used by the poet sum up what this poem is about?
2. This poem can be related to parts of both the first and the second poems you have read previously. Go through this poem and see how much of it you can relate to the first two poems. For example, the fourth line of this poem can very easily be related to the theme of the first poem.
3. This poem and the previous two have talked about women's position in a society. Women are not treated equally. Perhaps, as a class, you might want to discuss whether in your community women are treated equally/fairly. If they are not, why do you think this happens? Is violence against women something that is good for our community?





## Me, the Labourer

*Eti Sa'aga*

Me,  
The labourer, sweat  
in the sun,  
to pave the road  
for the rich man  
to ride on in comfort.  
My friend is the wind  
is cool on my body,  
and the sun  
is warm my soul  
from the stares and frowns  
of the people who pass  
me by.

They don't like me  
but they don't say it  
because they need me  
to do their dirty work.

I does my work hard  
and think of me.

Is good to have me  
think of me  
for there's no one to  
think of me but me.

My wife and kids  
think I'm very good worker  
but I get very little money.



The road is finished  
and pretty speeches are said.  
The rich man rides ahead,  
satisfied.  
More cars go by  
and race on into the evening.

But silently  
on the roadside  
I stand.  
No one sees me.  
No one waves.  
No one remembers me  
for the road I made.  
I walk back  
to the warmth of  
my wife and family.  
When is it to be  
my day?





## Thinking about the poem

1. The focus of the other poems in this section has been on women and how their treatment (especially in a family context) is not fair. This poem by Eti Sa’aga deals with unfairness of another kind.
2. What words in Stanza 1 are used to show a contrast between the labourer and the rich man?
3. Why are the “wind’ and the “sun” his friends?
4. Explain the line “They don’t like me”. What causes the labourer to say this?
5. The second stanza is about the way some look at labourers in the society. What is this attitude that the poet refers to? How can we treat people like the labourer more fairly and more equally? Give your views and opinions on this.
6. What does the third stanza tell you what the labourer would like? Is he reasonable or unreasonable? How can we bring about more equality in a society?
7. What do you notice about the language that the “me” in the poem uses? Do you think it is effective or adds to the poem? [Think of grammar.]
8. As a class, think of other ways in which we tend to treat some people unfairly – or treat them as if they are not fully like us. Think of what the poet Jasmine Navala Waleafea said in her poem (the first one).





## School for Boys

(For Tiri)

*Konai Helu Thaman*

i can play your silly games  
as well as you can  
i can run as far as you  
even in the dark

i can make you laugh  
i can make you cry  
i can even fix your shadow  
if i really care to try

i know i'm just as smart as you  
even smarter i'm willing to bet  
judging from your maths marks  
the last time we sat

so why all the grin and laughter  
when i'm answering teacher's questions  
at times i really wonder  
if you are worth her expectations



## Thinking about the poem

1. Who is the “i” in this poem? How can you tell?
2. What word in the fourth stanza tells you that there is a change in the poem? What are the first three stanzas about?
3. Explain the first two lines of the fourth stanza.
4. What does the last line of the poem mean?
5. Can you relate this poem to the other poems in this section that you have read?
6. Does your community value educating boys more than educating girls? What do you think?





Katherine Vaka'uta © 2019, Fiji  
Unspoken Words  
Medium: Digital art



## SECTION 2

**Inclusion, Being Inclusive, Respecting Diversity of  
People and Viewpoints**



## The Old Woman's Message

*Kumala Tawali*

Stick these words in your hair  
and take them to Polin and Manuai  
my sons:  
the ripe fruit falls and returns  
to the trunk - its mother.  
But my sons, forgetful of me,  
are like fruit borne by birds.  
I see the sons of other women  
returning. What is in their minds?  
Let them keep the price of their labour  
but their eyes are mine.  
I have little breath left  
to wait for them.  
I am returning to childhood.  
My stomach goes to my back,  
my hands are like broom sticks,  
my legs can fit in the sand crab's hole.  
I am dry like a carved image  
only my head is God's.  
Already I sway like a dry falling leaf  
I see with my hands -  
Oh tell Polin and Manuai to hurry  
and come to my death feast.



## Thinking about the poem

1. Look carefully at the title of the poem: it tells you what the poem is going to be about.
2. There is a metaphor in the lines starting “the ripe fruit falls ...”. Explain what this metaphor is. The poet continues with another metaphor. What does she compare her sons to?
3. What do you think these lines mean: “What is in their minds?/Let them keep the price of their labour”?
4. What does “I sway like a dry falling leaf” suggest to you?
5. What does “I see with my hands” suggest to you?
6. Does the old woman think her sons will come to see her before she dies? Give a reason for your answer.
7. What feelings does this poem arouse in you? Try to explain why.
8. Imagine you are Polin or Manuai. What answer would you give to the question, ‘Why don’t you visit your mother?’





## Untitled

### *Emelibter Kibleng*

I visit him everyday  
 in the hospital  
 the *pahpa kahlap*<sup>1</sup>  
 I never really had  
 today I brought some take-out,  
*kahri oh idihd en uht*<sup>2</sup>  
 and some *leh*<sup>3</sup>  
 to massage his foot  
 I sit on the floor, he in his wheelchair  
 hold his foot in my hands  
 my hands rubbing up from under his heel  
 up to his toes, neglected for so long  
 brown, dry flakes fall off his foot  
 onto my *urohs*<sup>4</sup>  
 and on to the tile floor in room 208  
 tears for the hopelessness I feel  
 when we're together

1

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1 Grandfather.

2 Curry (*kahri*) and (*oh*) grated banana cooked with coconut milk and sugar (*idihd en uht*).

3 Coconut oil.

4 Skirt.



## Thinking about the poem

1. This poem is a little different from the ones you have read previously. It has been written by a Pohnpein poet (Federated States of Micronesia) and uses the local language. What is different in the theme of this poem in comparison to the poem by Tawali that you read previously?
2. Do you think this is the narrator's (the "I" in the poem) real grandfather? Why?
3. What is "take-out"?
4. What do you think might be the matter with the old man?
5. The poet says "neglected for so long" – neglected by whom?
6. Explain the last three lines in the poem.
7. What is the main feeling you have when you read this poem? Be truthful; if you don't feel anything particular on reading this poem, just say that. [There is no right or wrong answer.]
8. Do you think poets should mix English and a local language in a poem? Give a reason for your answer. [Once again, there is no right or wrong answer.]







## Outcast

«-» ————— »-»  
*Makiuti Tongia*

You treat me a stranger  
in our father's house,  
you cast hard looks  
my way.  
Grandfather was one of  
your children  
by birth and tradition,  
a brother to all of you,  
yet you ill-treat me,  
you cast me out  
simply for living two generations  
in a foreign land.

Is it a sin to return  
to the *Avaiki*<sup>1</sup> of my fathers?

1

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1 Legendary home of the Polynesians.



## Thinking about the poem

1. Look at the way Tongia has used personal pronouns. Go through each one and discuss who or what is being referred to by each pronoun.
2. Perhaps some of you may have personal experiences of relatives (or their children, as in this poem) who have left their home country and then returned for a visit. Talk of these experiences. Are they anything like those described by Tongia?
3. Do you think there is a time when people stop 'belonging' to the country from where their forebears came? Give reason(s) for your answer.





## Mother Earth/Father Sky

«-» ————— »-»  
*Teresia Teaiwa*

They say in some parts of the Pacific that  
Men have wings  
While  
Women only have feet.

Some, in other parts of the Pacific, say  
That women belong to the land while  
Men belong to the sea.

Have you ever seen and heard  
A woman stand on the beach  
And wail, wail at the sea and sky?  
If you have then you have felt  
The peace of pain and the pain of peace.



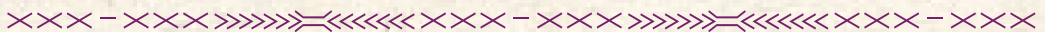
## Thinking about the poem

1. Poets use words to convey multiple meanings. “Wings” are not just what birds use to fly, but they give an idea of ‘freedom’, ‘move up into the air’, ‘get away from all troubles’ and so forth. In this poem, Teaiwa very cleverly uses such multiple meanings. Starting with “feet”, identify words that have many meanings, and talk about the other meanings associated with them.
2. Can you explain what the poet means by this line: “And wail, wail at the sea and sky?”
3. In the last line, the poet very cleverly uses words that normally don’t go together: “peace of pain” and “pain of peace”. [There is a technical word for such usage: it is called an ‘oxymoron’ – e.g. ‘cruel kindness’. See the section on ‘Reading Poetry’ to refresh your memory.] What do you think the poet means by the last line? What do you think is the message of this poem? Also, what is the effect of the oxymoron in this poem?
4. Now go back and discuss the title of this poem. How appropriate (or good) is this title for this poem?





Regina Shiki © 2019, Fiji  
Protect Our Young  
Medium: Digital art



## SECTION 3

**Addressing Violence Against Women, Protecting  
Marginalised Members of Our Communities**



## **My Neighbour**

*Konai Helu Thaman*

My neighbour is  
A very generous man  
He pays school fees  
Of needy children  
Every year  
Provides feasts  
For his church  
And is a supporter  
Of women's rights –  
Yet I can never understand  
Why he frequently  
Beats up his wife.



## Thinking about the poem

1. This is a poem of contrasts. What do you think might be the message of this poem?
2. Now discuss, from your own experience, whether you know of similar people in your own life.
3. Discuss how you think we can stop or lessen violence against women. [As you think about this issue, keep in mind something the very famous Indian Mahatma Gandhi said: “You must be the change you wish to see in the world”. Try to understand what Gandhi meant before you begin to discuss the issue of violence against women.]





## A Piece of Me

*Tina Takashy*

Mine are the tears  
that froze with the pain.

Mine are aches  
that have no name.

Mine are the sorrows  
that have no bounds.

Mine are the scars  
that never fade.

Mine are the hearts  
that find no peace.

Mine are the hurts  
that never cease.

Mine are the screams  
that no one hears.

Mine are the dreams  
remaining unfulfilled.

I dream of the moment  
that I feel no pain.

I dream of the hour  
that I feel no hurt.

I dream of the day  
that I shed no tears.

I dream of the time  
that sets me free.





## Thinking about the poem

1. Who do you think is the “Mine” in this poem?
2. Explain how or why
  - a. aches have no name?
  - b. scars never fade?
3. What types of dreams do you think are unfulfilled?
4. Explain the lines “Mine are the screams/that no one hears”.
5. The last line says, “that sets me free”. Free from what?
6. How do you feel about this person’s situation?



## The Old

*May Rona Ligo*

The old thatched roof stands  
At the foot of the hills  
And here passes the white man's highway.

Thrice a day, smoke rises  
Vertically but worriedly  
Through the old thatched roof  
As an old man cooks his meal  
Over the yellow flames.

His occupation is his garden,  
His money his crops,  
His friends the unseen spirits,  
His supporter his walking stick,  
But, where is everyone?

The young ones, where are they?  
In the towns of course!  
Suddenly thunder breaks the silence.  
"Oh! No! That's a motorcycle? Yes!"  
A Suzuki with a familiar figure.

"Why? It's grandson!"  
I'll wave, he must stop.  
"John!" Oh, no! He did not  
Even look this way.

Yes, he did, but he despises me  
Because I'm just one of  
Those old men who  
In the eyes of the young  
Are worthless.



## Thinking about the poem

1. In one or two sentences, say what this poem is about.
2. Are you familiar in your own life with the type of situation described in the poem? Tell the class about it. [Note: you don't have to say any names.]
3. Is this a problem in the Pacific communities? If it is a problem, discuss why this problem has arisen.
4. The old and the young have different experiences because the latter are growing up in a world that has changed a lot from the time when their parents and grandparents were young. What type of attitude should the old as well as the young develop in this modern day? Give a reason(s) for your answer.
5. Look at this quote from Mahatma Gandhi: "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any". Discuss what you think this means, and in doing so, see whether you can relate it to Question 4 above.
6. Finally, a brief question about the words used in this poem. How can smoke rise "worriedly"? [See the section on 'Reading Poetry' if you need to refresh your memory.]. Also comment on the use by Ligo of these words: "occupation", "money" and "friends".





## The Pavement

*Tarek Wael Wazni*

Just how does everyone stride past  
 the old frame on the pavement  
 without so much as a glance?  
 His eyes were alive,  
 they put me in a trance.  
 He longed to speak  
 because no one knew his tale,  
 or the secrets buried in his pockets;  
 all the dark things that he kept;  
 how, in the comfort of night, he wept.  
 And wept.

He carried a leather wallet,  
 home to one photograph  
 of the baby that he once nurtured-  
 of the son that had told him to wait here-  
 of the man that had never returned.  
 When he looked at you,  
 his gaze never faltered.  
 His attention was sincere.  
 I thought it unfair  
 for a beggar living on the street  
 to have a heart of gold;  
 He said, "Good things, too, grow old."

And was gone the next day,  
 and how one piece of pavement  
 can feel so much like a grave,  
 I will never understand.  
 Just how did everyone stride past the pavement  
 with God in their hand?



## Thinking about the poem

1. What does “stride past” suggest to you: a slow walk or a fast walk?
2. What is “the old frame”? Is this an example of (a) a metaphor, (b) a simile, (c) an oxymoron, (d) a synecdoche, or (e) an apostrophe? [You might want to re-read parts of the section entitled ‘Reading Poetry’ at the front of the book.]
3. What was the one thing in the man’s wallet? What do you think is the story of the son?
4. What was the impression created by the man on the street on the poet: (a) he looked half dead, (b) he was a good man, (c) he had a sincere look in his eyes, (d) he was a dirty beggar, (e) he was a bad person? Choose all the options you think are true, according to the poem.
5. [This might be best done as a whole class.] What does the last stanza convey to you?





Tui Ledua © 2019, Fiji  
Perfect Peace  
Medium: Digital art



## SECTION 4

**Social Justice More Broadly, Including Nuclear Justice  
and Climate Justice**



## Hunger

*Veronica*

Children are born  
into our world,  
Lacking food, they die.

With bulging stomachs  
and matchstick limbs,  
in the hot sun  
each body decays.

Fresh meat unknown  
and vegetables scarce,  
a diet of rice or musty corn.

We sit in apathy,  
content and unaware  
of those people dying.



## Thinking about the poem

1. Some of the poems we have looked at so far convey their message indirectly. By contrast, this poem is very direct, starting with its title. What two stanzas carry the main message? [Read Question 2 also before you answer this question.]
2. Which two stanzas give you more detailed information?
3. Which words used in the stanzas with details are related to ‘hunger’?
4. The word “apathy” has multiple meanings, and in this poem it is a very good word to use. What are the two things it describes very well? [Hint: one meaning is related to “We” and the other to “bulging stomachs” and “matchstick limbs”.] What word or words can you think of that might be the opposite of ‘apathy’?
5. Can you, as a student in your school, do anything about the situation described in the poem? Put down all your ideas on the blackboard/whiteboard so you can talk about each one. Relate your ideas to the idea of social justice for everyone.







## “Woman Can: And Do”

*Linda Passingan*

WOMEN OF PNG CARE  
WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
HOLD ON FAST TO OUR LAND  
KEEP OUR PRECIOUS FORESTS SAFE

DON'T LISTEN TO ANYONE  
WITH A FEW HUNDRED KINA<sup>1</sup>  
MEN WILL GET THIS ONCE ONLY ROYALTY

REMEMBER OUR CHILDREN WILL LIVE  
ON THIS SAME EARTH  
LET THEM ENJOY THE NATURAL RESOURCES  
OF OUR FOREST

SO CULTIVATE IT, LOOK AFTER IT  
AS YOU WOULD YOUR OWN CHILD

SAVE IT NOW – OR NEVER  
FOR OUR CHILDREN  
AND YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN  
AND BEYOND

1

---

1 Kina is the name of the money used in Papua New Guinea.



## Thinking about the poem

1. This poem is about environmental justice as well as social justice. For whom does the poet ask for social justice?
2. Who do you think can contribute to social justice in this context?
3. From the poem, can you tell what is happening to “our precious forests”?
4. Can you explain in your own words the second stanza? [If you don’t know the word “royalty”, find out/discuss this word first.]
5. Who do you think the poet is addressing in the line beginning “Remember our children ...”?
6. There are a number of different messages in this poem. What are they? Which one do you think might be the main one?
7. Here is what Mahatma Gandhi said: “The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children. So we have to handover to them at least as it was handed over to us.” Do you think the poet and Gandhi are giving similar messages?





## Homecoming

### *Pokwari Kale*

There were greetings from the living  
And handshakes from the dead.  
Familiar faces all, but remote.  
The sounds were strange  
The scene not remembered.  
Small hills had grown into mountains  
And had moved closer together  
With grey clouds hanging from their brows.  
The devil had been around planting unusual trees  
Leaving wide valleys, dark and green  
Clear of all human trace.  
A big place for himself to reign?  
Was I cut off to put roots in the air  
And expected to grow fruit thereon?  
All was so quiet, so cold, so vast,  
I felt lonely and small, like a wanderer  
Walking through an ancient, ruined kingdom.

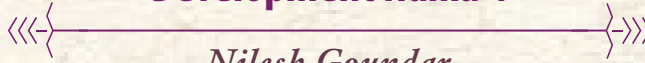


## Thinking about the poem

1. One of the poems in the junior secondary section also dealt with ‘homecoming’. The poet in that poem focused on how he was treated on his return home. In Kale’s poem he is not concerned with how he was treated but how something had been treated while he was away. What is Kale writing about?
2. If, in Question 1, you were thinking of ‘land’ and how it had been treated, you were on the right track. Now go through the poem and list as many things as you can that seemed to have changed while the “I” was away from his home.
3. Let’s look at how the poet uses language to achieve the effect he wants:
  - a. How can the author shake hands with the dead? What could he mean by this line?
  - b. How would you explain this line, “Familiar faces all, but remote”?
  - c. Poets often don’t give you the detail but use words to try to get the readers to create meanings for themselves. Why do you think the “sounds were strange”? And what might these strange sounds be?
  - d. “Small hills” growing into “mountains” gives you a clue about what might be happening in his homeland. What do you think has happened in his home area while he has been away?
  - e. Planting trees is good. So why does the poet say it is the devil that has planted them?
4. What does the poet mean by the line beginning with “Was I cut off”?
5. In the last three lines, identify all the words that suggest that the poet did not like the changes he saw in his home area.
6. Having thought about this poem, can you see how it relates to some parts of the poem ‘Women Can: And Do’ that you read previously? Discuss the relationship between the two poems.
7. Having thought about the two poems, how can you relate them to the idea of ‘justice’?



## Development Haiku 4



*Nilesh Goundar*

wings clipped  
(de) gassing, fishing, forestry, mining  
fly paradise bird

### Thinking about the poem

1. What does the expression “wings clipped” mean?
2. Look at the second line. What do the words bring to your mind?
3. Can you guess which country the poet might have in his mind? What is the clue?
4. Do you think the writer is saying that the type of development he mentions is good for the country? Why do you think this?
5. As a class, discuss some of the environmental issues facing your country and the Pacific.
6. Discuss how you, your class, your school can be more environmentally responsible.
  - a. Think of one action you personally can take to become environmentally more responsible.
  - b. Think of one action your whole class can take to become environmentally more responsible.
  - c. Think of one action your school can take to become environmentally more responsible.
  - d. How can you make these actions a reality?





## Old Woman on the Street Corner

*Olimiva Luveniyali*

She sits  
 with tears on her cheek  
 her cheek on her hand  
 the child  
 in her lap  
 Her hand  
 weary, rough,  
 pointing at me -  
 Do you care?

### Thinking about the poem

1. What do you think the old woman is doing?
2. Do you think she is pointing at people? What is she more likely to be doing with her hand or hands?
3. What does the last line mean? To whom is this question addressed? Give a reason for your answer.
4. Why do we sometimes have people in towns, especially, doing what this woman is doing? What can society/community/government do about this type of situation?





*Before reading the next poem, perhaps the class might like to talk about the atomic bomb testing that was carried out in the Pacific, especially the testing done on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The poem 'Fishbone Hair' is related to that event.*



Arvind Nath Sukul (Red Cave Arts) © 2019, Fiji  
Nuke  
Medium: Acrylic on canvas



## Fishbone Hair

*Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner*

Inside my niece Bianca's old room I found

two ziplocks  
stuffed  
with rolls and rolls of hair

dead as a doornail black as a tunnel hair thin  
as strands of tumbling seaweed

Maybe it was my sister  
who stashed away Bianca's locks in ziplock bags  
locked it away so no one could see  
trying to save that  
rootless hair  
that hair without a home

There had been a war  
raging inside Bianca's six year old bones  
white cells had staked their flag  
they conquered the territory of her tiny body  
they saw it as their destiny  
they said it was manifested

It





all  
fell  
out  
I felt  
bald  
and blank  
as Bianca's  
skull  
when they closed  
her casket  
hymns  
wafting  
into the night sky  
Bianca loved  
to eat fish



she ate it raw ate it fried ate it whole

she ate it with its head

slurping on the eyeball jelly

leaving only

tiny

neat

bones

The marrow

should have worked

They said she had

six months

to live

That's what the doctors told the fishermen

over 50 years ago

when they were out at sea

just miles

away from Bikini

the day the sun

exploded

split open

and rained ash

on the fishermen's clothes



On that day those fishermen  
were quiet  
they were neat  
they dusted the ash  
out of their hair  
reeled in their fish  
  
and turned around their motorboat to speed home

There is an old Chamorro legend  
that the women of Guahan saved their island  
from a giant coral eating fish  
by hacking off their  
long and black as the night sky hair

They wove their locks  
into a massive magical net

They caught the monster fish

and saved their islands

Thin

rootless

fishbone hair



black

night

sky

catch

ash

catch

moon

catch

star

for you Bianca

for you



## Thinking about the poem

1. You will notice that this poem looks different. It is because the poet, Jetñil-Kijiner, believes that the shape of a poem is part of poetry. Above all, she wants her poems to be read aloud. For this reason, you might also like to listen to her reciting her poetry. The video is to be found on this website: <https://jkijiner.wordpress.com/video-poems/> Scroll down, if necessary, until you find the video of this poem.
2. How does the poet describe the hair she finds?
3. Later she describes the hair as “rootless”. What does she mean?
4. Look at the line beginning “There had been a war” until lines “it all fell out”. What war is the poet referring to?
5. Why do you think the poet has put each word in “it all fell out” on a separate line and in a different ‘space’ on the page?
6. What words tell us that Bianca has died?
7. The part of the poem that begins with “Bianca loved” is an explanation. What do you think might have caused Bianca’s illness?
8. What do you think happened to the fishermen while they were at sea 50 years ago?
9. How do you think the old Chamorro legend is linked to the last part of the poem?
10. Read this poem aloud in class. If you can screen it in your class, have the video of the poet reading her poem played in your class.
11. Teachers, give your students 10–15 minutes to write down their reactions/ thoughts to this poem. Tell them that their private thoughts need not be shared with others (including you, the teacher) if they don’t wish to.





## Without a Barrier Reef

«««-»»»  
*Craig Santos Perez* «-»»»

### 1.

I hold my wife’s hand during the ultrasound. “That’s your future,” the doctor says, pointing to a fetus floating in amniotic fluid.

One night a year, after the full moon, after the tide touches a certain height, after the water reaches the right temperature, after salt brines, only then will the ocean cue swollen coral polyps to spawn, in synchrony, a galaxy of gametes.

We listen to our unborn daughter’s heartbeats; they echo our ancestors pulsing taut skin drums in ceremony and arrival.

These buoyant stars dance to the surface, open, fertilize, and form larvae. Some will be eaten by plankton and fish, others will sink to substrate or seabed, root and bud. “She looks like a breathing island,” my wife says, whose body has become a barrier reef.

### 2.

The weather spawns another hurricane above Hawai’i. Rain drums the pavement as flood warning alerts vibrate our cellphones. In bed, we read a children’s book, *The Great Barrier Reef*, to our daughter, who’s two years old now, snuggled between us. “The corals have mouths,



stomachs, and arms,” we tell her, pointing to our matching body parts.  
“They form families, like us. They even build homes and villages.”

She loves touching every picture of tropical fish and intricate corals;  
I love that the pictures never change (and isn’t that, too, a kind of shelter).

We close the book, kiss her forehead, and whisper: “Sweet dreams.”  
She is our most vulnerable island, and we are her barrier reef.

### 3.

A few years from now, we’ll go snorkeling. The water will drum against  
our skin. The ocean will be warmer, murkier. No fish,

anywhere. All is bleached and broken. When we return to the eroded shore,  
she’ll ask: “Daddy, are the corals dead?” I won’t tell her about dredging,

pollution, or emissions; I won’t tell her about corals struggling to spawn,  
frozen in vaults, reared in labs and nurseries. “Don’t worry,” I’ll answer:

“They’re just sleeping.” She’ll look into the water and whisper:  
“sweet dreams,” as the surface of the sea closes like a book.



## Thinking about the poem

1. You recall reading in the section on ‘Reading Poetry’ that poets are able to convey a number of different meanings at the same time in a poem. Note also that this poet has divided his poem into four sections, each of which has two-line stanzas. When you read the first two lines of the poem, what do you think the poem is going to be about? [If you have not yet covered human birth in your science classes, get your teacher to talk about foetus (“fetus” is the American spelling) and amniotic fluid.]
2. The next four lines talk about something quite different. What is it? [You probably all know about it and have a word in your language for the ‘spawning’.]
3. Do you like the metaphor in “a galaxy of gametes”? Why?
4. What does the unborn child’s heartbeat remind the parents of?
5. What are “These buoyant stars”? What is the poetical term we use for such imagery?
6. Explain the last two lines in Stanza 1 and in doing so you will be explaining what the metaphor is.
7. In Stanza 2, how does the poet convey the idea that time has passed since the description in Stanza 1?
8. What do you think the parents are trying to teach their little child in this section?
9. Barrier reef is mentioned again (Stanza 2). What is the difference between the barrier reef in Stanza 1 and the one in Stanza 2?
10. What time is the poet speaking of in Stanza 3? What does he foresee happening?
11. What does the poet say are the causes of the changes he foresees?
12. Why do you think the father will say “They’re just sleeping”? [Note: there can be multiple answers to this question.]
13. What message do you think the poet is trying to give in this poem? [Look at the title and think about it.]





## TE I-KIRIBATI DESCENDANT

*Tanua Pine*

I was born an i-Kiribati man because my parents are both i-Kiribati. And to be full blooded i-Kiribati my parents both father and mother have lands. This is what is deserved in the eyes of the public and to earn them a title AOMATA<sup>1</sup>. In all and because I inherit these from them is what qualifies me to call myself a being of i-Kiribati descendant.

The rising of the sun from the east and its setting in the west must be marked with completion of tasks as expected of your being.

As a man to wake up in a time called

TETAIRUAREREI<sup>2</sup>

Sharpen your toddy knife, get your toddy shells and up on the coconut trees whistle and sing

Take your kete,<sup>3</sup> lift your canoe put sail and paddles and anima<sup>4</sup> on and paddle your canoe out to your fishing spot

Take your knife and bag and go do bush work

From the time Tematawarebwe<sup>5</sup> left Samoa and arrived at Teakiauma<sup>6</sup> the crystal sands of my beaches lay where the forces of waves stop

Following the natural law of nature

leaving the beautiful heap of stones (Naan<sup>7</sup>) on Waeamarawa<sup>8</sup> intact

Looking from offshore to mainland I cannot forget the beautiful scenery of a white silk piece of cotton laid up as a cushion way for young boys and girls to play on and the dark green bush overshadowing the background.

Decades after decades changes begin to show their cruel impacts

Sand mixed with gravel, stones form skeletal images. Is this true? Where are we now?



Where is this natural setting I used to see ages ago?  
My son, it has gone and gone we should also be!  
But on what specific grounds should we go?

My son my son my son  
Waves leave Araumwaumwa<sup>9</sup> and break at Tanrakenteuanou<sup>10</sup>  
Resulting in waves running into our Bareaka<sup>11</sup> and goes into Kanamonrua<sup>12</sup> and inland  
Look at those babai<sup>13</sup> pits and wells where we get water for drink  
And most amazingly during high tide the sea level is above seawalls  
Well - still not yet fully convinced but I will take the matter conditionally  
Options are appreciated  
“My reader! Here lies the assumption of having i-Kiribati to migrate.  
But migrate with Dignity rests on your level of education.”

- 
1. *Aomata* means human.
  2. *Tetairuarerei* is the sun's first light on the earth or on land.
  3. *Kete* means a basket where a fisherman puts and keeps his fishing gear: hooks, fishing line, etc.
  4. *Anima* means a container used to scoop water out from the canoe.
  5. *Tematawarebwe* means a person with big eyes, Sharp-Seeing, who travelled all the way from Samoa with his two brothers Teeua and on the tree of life (Tekaintikuaba) assisted by two men.
  6. *Teakiauma* is a name given to a place where Tematawarebwe is situated where he can see whoever is coming from both ends of the island Beru, and planted the tree called Tekanawa.
  7. *Naan* means a heap of stones or a collection of stones.
  8. *Waeamarawa* is a name given to a heap of stones pointing to the island of Nikunau located at the southern end called Tabonteaba of Taboiaki village on Beru.
  9. *Araumwaumwa* is the name of a place where waves start to rise in height before breaking on the reefs.
  10. *Tanrakenteuanou* is the name of a spot at the eastern side of the island.
  11. *Bareaka* is the name of a building specifically built for the canoe; a dwelling place for the canoe but members of a family also use it to live showing the importance of the canoe. Family members live with it as a sign of custody.
  12. *Kanamonrua* means the babai pit.
  13. *Babai* (or bwabwai) is swamp taro.



## Thinking about the poem

1. This is an unusual poem, with the first part reading like prose. In it, the poet explains what gives a man in i-Kiribati society his identity. What is important to have to be a full i-Kiribati?
2. The second stanza deals with three things a man does in the traditional i-Kiribati society. What are they?
3. The next stanza gives an explanation for how Kiribati was formed. What is this explanation?
4. In the next stanza, you get a description of what the island looks like from a canoe on the sea. Describe what the poet says and explain the metaphor he uses for the sand.
5. What changes does the poet mention in the stanza beginning “Decades after decades ...”?
6. Why do you think the poet mentions his son?
7. What do you think is meant by “gone we should also be!”? (Stanza 5)
8. Stanza 6 gives some specific details. What is the poet talking about here?
9. In the last two lines, the poet addresses the reader directly. What is it that he thinks the people of Kiribati might have to do?
10. What do you think the last line means? Can you also see that what the poet talked about in Stanza 1 might have an impact on an i-Kiribati society overseas? What might be this impact?
11. Do you think a culture can be transplanted to a new land?





## THINKING ABOUT THE POEMS YOU HAVE READ

1. You will probably need to read the poems again to remind yourself what they were saying. You will see that these poems are all dealing with some aspect of human rights and justice. What do you understand by this term 'human rights'? Perhaps your teacher can put down all your ideas on the whiteboard/blackboard so that you can talk about the issues of human rights. In your discussion, you should also consider who might be responsible for addressing these issues: the government, communities, individuals?
2. Now you can discuss how these ideas you have put on the blackboard/whiteboard can be related to your own life. What sorts of behaviours must you show that tell people that you care for the rights of others?



Senior  
Secondary  
Poems





Arvindra Nath Sukul (Red Cave Arts) © 2019, Fiji  
Possession  
Medium: Acrylic on canvas



# SECTION 1

**Equality, Non-Discrimination,  
Treating People Fairly and Equally**



## A Reminder “You are A Girl”

*Anonymous*

### **At home**

Your mother tells you to

Sit like a girl

Talk like a girl

Look like a girl

Walk like a girl

Eat like a girl

Dress like a girl

Work like a girl

Dance like a girl

Smile like a girl

No matter where you are  
you are constantly reminded  
“You are a girl”

### **At school**

Your teacher tells you to

Play girl’s sports

Sit in the girl’s area

Do girl’s work

Use girl’s toilets

Perform girls’ dance

Sing girl’s parts

Wear girl’s uniform

Take girl’s subjects

Behave like a girl

Sleep in the girls’ dormitories

Share girl’s stories

Say girl’s prayers



Play girl's instruments  
Ask permission to go out  
No matter where you are  
you are constantly reminded  
"You are a girl"

**In the village**

The village chief tells you to  
Do women's chores like:  
cleaning the cemetery, and the community hall  
Taking the children to the clinic  
Selling vegetables at the market  
Clearing and planting a new garden  
Cooking food for the men  
Fetching water for the family  
Taking the family's laundry to the creek  
Taking the children to school  
Cleaning around the school  
Performing girls' dance  
No matter where you are  
you are constantly reminded  
"You are a girl"

**At work**

Your boss tells you to  
Dress up like a lady and  
Look beautiful  
Make tea for everyone  
Do the filing and photocopying  
Answer the telephone  
Take minutes and shut up in meetings  
Do catering for important meetings  
Welcome and entertain the guest





Be on time for work  
Come to work everyday  
Take maternity leave without pay  
Deduct your pay when your baby is sick  
No matter where you are  
you are constantly reminded  
“You are a girl”

**At home**

Your husband tells you to  
Prepare the evening meal  
Stay home when the children are sick  
Ask permission before going out  
Make sure the home is clean  
Do the family’s laundry  
Gather firewood and fetch water  
Entertain friends  
Cook and clean up after every meal  
Grow and harvest vegetables  
Make clothes for the children  
Shut up, and don’t complain

No matter where you are  
you are constantly reminded  
“You are a girl.”



## Thinking about the poem

1. This is a poem that is best discussed in groups. But first read it aloud in the whole class before breaking up the class into groups.
2. What do you understand by the term ‘cultural upbringing’? Talk about this until you feel you have some understanding of this term.
3. Now look at the first stanza entitled “At home”. What do you think the mother means by each of the things she tells her daughter?
4. The stanza “At school” has a mix of things. For example, the line “Take girl’s subjects” is not quite the same as “Behave like a girl”. Perhaps we can call the former ‘tradition’ – in other words, what we have done previously many times – and tradition can change over time (as circumstances change). Go through each line and discuss whether you agree with the “teacher” in each case. Try to give your reason for your answer. Do any of the things mentioned in this section apply to you in your school?
5. In the stanza “In the village”, for what ‘type of woman’ can the roles change? As you did for Question 4, go through each of the lines.
6. Go through the stanza “At work”, and decide which of the things the boss tells her are like what her mother or the village chief tells her. Is the boss right?
7. Finally, do things change for the girl after she gets married? Discuss the second-last stanza. How does this stanza link up with others?
8. What do you think the poet is trying to say in this poem?
9. If you have time, perhaps you might like to write your own version of this poem. You can leave in any line you like and add other lines of your own – perhaps what you would like to hear from your mother, school, village chief, boss and husband. For boys, see whether you can use this poem as a template for what you think your ‘father’ and all the other categories might tell you.





## Invisibility

*Grace Molisa*

Woman struggles and sweats  
to feed a houseful of visitors.  
When they leave they say, "Thank You."  
To the man of the House.

Women scrimp and save to acquire  
Household items.  
Permission to borrow is sought  
From the Man in the Family.

Discussions about a Woman  
are held between males.  
Woman hears about their decision.

Women get sacked  
without reason, without notice.  
Women are last hired first fired.



## Thinking about the poem

1. What do you think Molisa meant by the title of this poem?
2. Before proceeding further, decide whether the poet thinks that it is good that these things are happening to women.
3. One of the things good poets do is to make the words they choose carry emotional meanings also (usually referred to as ‘emotive meaning’). Molisa uses words like “struggles” and “sweats” to convey the idea of difficulty/effort/pushing oneself. Find other words in the poem that also carry ‘emotive meanings’. How do they add to the effect of the poem?
4. In each of the four scenarios the poet talks about, why do you think the woman is unhappy?
5. Can you relate this poem to the one you read previously entitled ‘A Reminder “You are a Girl”’? Compare the two and say which YOU like, giving a brief reason for your answer.





Now read the next two poems together.

## You Left Your Society to Me

*Agnes Dewenis*

My Grandmother

O Bubu

You knew your place in Nissan<sup>1</sup> Society

You accepted your lower place in society

Now you're gone

And left your society to me

My Mother

O Ni

Bubu introduced you to Nissan<sup>1</sup> Society

Now you're gone too

And left your society to me

Now on my own

Ingo

Ni introduced me to Nissan Society

I once accepted my lower place in society

Now I don't

And while I'm still here

I will elevate my place

So that when I'm gone too

My daughter will have a better place

in Nissan Society

---

<sup>1</sup> Nissan is an island in the Papua New Guinea group.



## Women's Lib

*Konai Helu Thaman*

If we always knew  
where we were going  
we'll never take a step  
so come with me sister  
let's take a chance  
and make a break  
after all  
we cannot all go back  
to the land



## Thinking about the poems

1. The first two poems in this section stated problems as the poets saw them. Dewenis’s poem also mentions a problem. What is the problem? What does she plan for her daughter?
2. How is the last stanza of Dewenis’s poem related to the poem by Thaman?
3. Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher and writer who lived more than 2500 years ago, said, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”. How do you think this quote is related to Thaman’s poem? [Find out, first, what a ‘philosopher’ is.]
4. What is “women’s lib”? Find out more about this term from the internet, if necessary, and as a class discuss ideas related to this term.





## Corrective Activities

*Grace Molisa*

WE women ourselves  
must act  
in whatever way possible  
in our own situation  
to start making  
Corrective changes.

Women must Speak Out,  
Stand up to be counted,  
Voice our opinions,  
Go out to be seen,  
Participate in Decision-making,  
Take control of ourselves and our actions.

Taking control of our Situation,  
Articulating our Concerns,  
Sharing our Ideas  
Teaching by Showing  
Learning by Doing  
Actively participating  
In Planning, Deciding and Evaluating,  
Policies, Programmes and Activities,  
That Affect, Impinge and Impact upon our lives.





We women ourselves  
must assert ourselves  
Our Identity, credibility, visibility  
Bringing about that change  
Which makes that difference  
In upgrading the Status of Women  
By giving us Women our rightful control  
Over ourselves, over our own lives,  
Over our Situation, Health and Environment  
Giving and claiming for ourselves by ourselves our Dignity  
Our Humanity and Justice we Deserve!



## Thinking about the poem

1. Refresh your memory about Thaman’s poem (‘Women’s Lib’) above. Can you see a similarity between what Thaman and Molisa are saying?
2. In what way does the first stanza of Molisa’s poem link to the last stanza of Dewenis’s poem?
3. Which one of these four expressions best describes what Molisa wants women to do?
  - a. Just be yourself
  - b. To be healthy
  - c. To assert themselves
  - d. To take over in the society
4. What words in the first stanza show that Molisa knows that it is not easy for all women to do all the things she suggests?
5. Explain the line in Stanza 2 “Stand up to be counted”.
6. What can “Affect, Impinge and Impact” on women’s lives? How do you think women can ensure that the effect or impact can be minimised?
7. What words in the last stanza tells us that Molisa does not expect some group of men or some official body to bring about change for women?
8. From your own experience, give examples of what Molisa might be thinking of when she uses these words: “Situation”, “Health” and “Environment”.
9. Where in the poem does Molisa introduce the idea of ‘human rights’?
10. Look at the way the poet has used capital letters. Why do you think she has done so?
11. In poetry (as in songs) repetition is often used to emphasise the meaning or to emphasise the message. It can be repetition of words, language structures, or theme. What is the form of repetition that Molisa uses in this poem?
12. Why do you think Molisa chose to call her poem ‘Corrective Activities’? Think how you can relate this title to the contents of the poem.



## Songs of the fat brown woman (for *sista grace (nichols)* and the fat black woman)

«-» ————— »-»  
*Sia Figiel*

*[The subject matter of this poem is different. While a woman has been used, this could apply equally to a man. See the notes below the poem that give you the background to why the poem was written. Figiel is a very well-known Samoan novelist and a performance poet – that is, she reads her poems aloud at different venues. Here is a link to her reading her poems:*

*<http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/pasifika/figiel1.asp>*

The fat brown woman move in the breeze  
under the thatch of the small small fale<sup>1</sup>  
braiding sinnet  
weaving stories  
between the leaves of the pandanus

The fat brown woman sweat in the sun  
lean on a coconut palm  
swaying in the coconut sun  
in colourful lavalava too small for her waist

The fat brown woman in the sea  
is a sight to see  
diving for blue fish red fish  
an occasional eel  
The fat brown woman walking home from the sea  
is a sight to see

---

1 *Fale* is a Samoan house.



Around the fat brown woman there is  
always a man or two  
Big or small  
Smiling smiling  
At the way her hip sway  
At the sound her thigh make  
Around the fat brown woman there is  
always a fly  
or two  
too

See the fat brown woman at a fa'alavelave<sup>2</sup>  
Directing the men the women  
A fine mat here  
A pig there  
In her fat brown woman voice  
in her fat brown woman style  
gentle but firm  
is the fat brown woman

When the fat brown woman hops on the bus the girls  
and boys whisper  
and men and women whisper  
and children and cat whisper whisper  
and pigs too sometimes  
watch her sway  
sway sway  
and her arms moving like dat  
and a shaking like dat  
is her tummy too

---

2 *Fa'alavelave* is any event in the Samoan culture that involves the gathering of the extended family.



they make room right behind the skinny  
bus driver who gives her a big fat wink  
the fat brown woman takes out a bright red  
hanky wipes the sweat off her brow  
pats her cheek  
adjusts her dress/her bra/  
her hip  
chase away the flies  
give the bus driver a mean look  
Is going be a long way to market

So you can look all you want  
And you can watch all you want  
And you can stare all you want  
But the fat brown woman will keep  
swaying her hip  
Keep swaying her hip  
All the way to town



[Notes by Figiel about the origin of the poem. “Songs of the fat brown woman” was inspired by one of my trips to London. I was in a shoe store, surrounded by all these African, Caribbean women. Of course we were all there because we had size 12 feet and we were looking for shoes. London (and most of the Western AND Eastern world for that matter) can be very unforgiving to women with big feet. Anyways, I spotted a size 13 and was about to dive for it when another brown hand grabbed it right before me. I looked up to confront the hand and she looked at me with a big smile and said: “Malo e lelei, tahine Hamaoa.” And that’s how I met my Tongan friend Mavis!

I was further inspired to write “Songs” after I met and had lunch with Grace Nichols at my then apartment in Berlin, a decade ago. Nichols is a former winner of the Commonwealth Prize for Poetry and is of course famous for writing the Poems of the Fat Black Woman BUT the difference is, she’s a very skinny woman! I said to myself, someone with authority on fat has to be the one to write the songs of the fat brown woman! And the rest, of course, is history. Thank you. (Taken from Sia Figiel’s website.)]

## Thinking about the poem

1. Figiel describes the fat woman quite realistically. In other words, she does not pretend that the way the body of a fat person moves is not different from the way the body of non-fat person moves. Why do you think she does this?
2. Did you notice in the poem there is some non-standard use of English? See whether you can identify one or two examples. [You get similar language usage in some dialects of West Indian English.] Try and suggest a reason why Figiel might use non-standard English.
3. What is the point that the poet is making in the last stanza of the poem?
4. Would you say that to be accepted ‘as one is’ is the human right of each person? Why? Do you know of other examples where people are not accepted ‘as they are’?





## The Survivor in Me

*Shamil Ali*

When I was 5 a boy in my class asked if I was a poofter  
Then he laughed and ran towards his friends  
You see back then  
I didn't understand what it meant  
Till I reached the age of nine  
When I realized it was a derogatory term  
And for the longest time I suffered in silence  
I was the boy who got teased for being feminine  
The boy who was told to behave like a man  
The boy that was asked mean questions  
The boy that other kids made fun of  
The boy that had to endure physical violence  
The boy that you'd bully for your entertainment  
The boy who felt like he was serving a harsh sentence  
For something which shouldn't even be an offense  
The boy who felt like the classroom was his prison  
The boy who thought about consuming poison  
Because that felt like an easier option  
Rather than going through such a horrible experience  
The boy that got pushed around and was shunned

But one day I stood up for myself and you were STUNNED  
I refused to be a victim and let you mock my presence  
So thank you, thank you so much for being the reason  
As to why I had to become such a strong person  
Now you will keep quiet and listen, LISTEN  
You do NOT have the permission



To make someone else feel like a second class person  
Simply because they don't fall within your version  
Of what's considered to be the normal equation

So I'm here to tell you that I'm going to RIOT for my rights  
Rest be assured I'm NOT going out without a fight  
I'm NOT letting anybody dim my light  
Put on your shades because I'm going to shine bright  
I'm gonna light up that torch and march into the night  
I refuse to keep remaining quiet  
NOO, I'm NOT some form of blight  
Get your eyes checked if my presence annoys your sight  
Your hatred and bigotry will not diminish my might  
I'm going to let my colors fly like a lose kite  
I refuse to let you paint my life black and white

You say I'm being too LOUD  
But at the same time you say LGBTQI not allowed  
Well listen up I'm part of LGBTQI and PROUD  
So get your head out of the cloud  
I refuse to change to fit in with the crowd  
I refuse to let your hate have me silenced  
You say I'm being too self centered  
You say I'm shoving the LGBTQI agenda  
But you at the same time disrespect someone's chosen gender  
You mock people and wish they were buried six feet under

You ask rather ignorantly what about straight pride?  
I ask you WHAT about it?  
Have you been BULLIED, TORTURED, RAPED, ABUSED, MURDERED, CRIMINALIZED?  
For simply being straight?





Have you been told you'll enter hells gate?  
For simply being straight?  
Have you ever had to cry and question your fate?  
For simply being straight?  
Do you know someone who hung himself to death?  
For simply being straight?  
So why don't you just KEEP QUIET mate  
And be thankful you don't need a reason to celebrate  
For simply being straight

So I refuse, I bloody refuse to let your hate get to me  
Listen up I'm not going to cower and flee  
I'm going to stand tall like the mighty tree  
I'm going to break all the shackles till I'm free  
So bring your knives and your axes and your sticks and stones  
And even if you may succeed in pulling me down and breaking my bones  
There will rise another me and another and another and another and another  
and another  
Till you realize that we ACTUALLY MATTER.



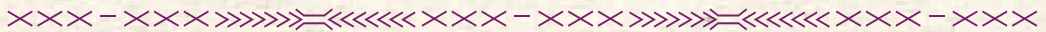
## Thinking about the poem

1. What is a “derogatory term” (Stanza 1)?
2. Mention three things that the boy in the poem had to endure or put up with. Do you think it is fair or just that he should have to put up with such behaviour? Give a reason or reasons for your answer.
3. To what is “serving a harsh sentence” linked to later in the poem?
4. Explain how you can be “pushed around” and also be “shunned”.
5. What do the last two lines of Stanza 2 mean?
6. How does the boy in the poem intend to stand up for his rights?
7. The boy talks of “straight pride” but what does the whole stanza tell you?
8. Explain the last line of the poem.
9. Notice the rhyming lines in Stanzas 3, 4 and 6. Read them aloud. What effect does it have on the poem (keeping in mind that poetry is for recitation – reading aloud)?
10. As a class discuss what is meant by LGBTQI. Do people who fall under this title have the right to be treated fairly and equally? [Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with the following sentence: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Consider this also before you answer the previous question.]





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Flying Without Wings  
Medium: Digital art



## SECTION 2

**Inclusion, Being Inclusive, Respecting Diversity of People and Viewpoints**



## I Am Me

*Leba Whippy*

In the whole world, there is no other person exactly like me  
there have been people who have some parts like me  
but no one else is exactly like me  
Everything I think, do and say belongs to me.

I own everything about me  
my body and everything it does  
my mind including all of its thoughts and ideas  
my eyes including all they see  
my hands including all they create  
my feelings, whatever they might be  
my jealousy, fear, joy, happiness, or excitement  
my mouth and all the words that come out  
    some are soft, some loud  
    some rough, some smooth,  
    some right and some wrong

I own all my dreams, my hopes, my fear and successes  
Because I own all of me.

I can begin to be friendly with me and all the different parts of me  
I can work towards making things better for me  
there are things about me, that I don't understand  
things that I think and do and say that worries  
but as long as I am friendly with me, and care for myself,  
I can look for answers to my questions and ways to improve.

However I look, whatever I say or do,  
whatever I think or feel at this moment in time is me  
if I think later how I looked and sounded today



how I thought and felt today  
some of what I did today may seem to have been wrong  
But I can get rid of what is wrong,  
and keep what I know is right.

I can put something new into my life  
replace the wrong I have taken out  
I can see, hear, feel, think, say and do.  
I am learning how to live a full and happy life  
be and feel close to others  
be helpful and honest with them  
see sense, order and good  
in the world of people and things around

I own me and I can change or control me  
I am me and I am Okay.



## Thinking about the poem

1. Read the first stanza. Can you say the same thing about yourself? Mention one thing that makes you unique.
2. Whippy in Stanza 2 seems to accept responsibility for all her thoughts and actions. In small groups, discuss whether you too take all the responsibility for your actions, or whether you blame others for your actions and words. In discussing this idea, think about what it means to you to be responsible for your actions.
3. Do you think it is just enough to accept your actions as yours and leave it at that? Whippy seems to be suggesting something more in Stanzas 3, 4 and 5. What do you think this is?
4. Can you try to put into your own words what Whippy might mean by the last two lines?
5. Over 2000 years ago there was a philosopher called Socrates. He said, “An unexamined life is a life not worth living”. Whippy, in the second half of the poem, talks about examining her actions and words and reforming them where necessary. It is a bit like Socrates’ idea, except he goes further. He thinks we should all examine ourselves – who we are deep down inside – and set standards for ourselves – about behaviour, about how we behave with people, what we say that might hurt other people – and live our lives according to these standards that WE set for OURSELVES. As a whole class or in small groups, discuss some of the standards that you can set for yourselves.





## To Swim with Eels

*Emelibter Kibleng*

[To help you understand this poem, this is what the poet wrote in her collection of poetry 'Urohs' about herself: "This poem describes my relationship with the kousapw of Saladak in the chieftom of U where I grew up. Most of the people in Saladak are Lasialap, members of the ruling clan who are descendants of Kemisik, freshwater eels. Pohnpei is matrilineal and you thus earn your clan membership through your mother. Since my mother is white and my father is Pohnpeian, I don't have a clan. My father's clan, Dipwinren, are descendants of rodents and that's why I refer to myself as part kitik, part rat."]

part of me comes from rodents  
 a rat surrounded by *kemisik*<sup>1</sup>  
 in Saladak, land of *lasialap*<sup>2</sup>  
 all my friends are *kemisik*  
 while I am only part *kitik*<sup>3</sup>

I could have been eaten, then  
 taken to the mouth of the river

the other part of me is empty  
 with no animals to call family  
 whiteness mistaken  
 for nothingness

I swam with *lasialap* girls  
 and their ancestors who  
 lurked behind rocks  
 and was never afraid although

I could have been eaten, then  
 taken to the mouth of the river



I have heard of children in Kitti  
who swim with sacred eels  
in freshwater pools and streams  
never to be bit

my fingers bled twice from  
the mouths of eels who  
tried to eat the food off my fingers  
a warning

I could have been eaten, then  
taken to the mouth of the river

Saladak is theirs eternally  
descendants of Lien Madauleng,  
their eel ancestress, who came to Pohnpei  
on a school of *marep*  
and gave birth to four eel daughters

I am not one of them  
Sounpasedo, of chiefly lineage  
and *kemisik* blood, yet  
we swam and ate together like sisters  
but I must remember

I could have been eaten  
by *kemisik* girls and their mothers  
long, slick bodies full,  
*manaman*,<sup>4</sup>  
swimming upstream  
to give birth to male chiefs

---

1 *Kemisik*: freshwater eels.

2 *Lasialap*: the ruling clan of U; their eni (ancestral spirit) is the *kemisik*.

3 *Kitik*: rat.

4 *Manaman*: spiritual power.





## Thinking about the poem

1. In Leba Whippy’s poem that you read previously, she is emphasising personal identity – ‘take me as I am’. In this poem, Kihleng is focused on clan identity. You will also notice the very unusual line lengths and lack of punctuation. This is a poem that you must read aloud and let the sense and meaning of the poem dictate where you will pause.
2. Explain in your own words what the line starting with “the other part of me is empty” and ending with “for nothingness” means.
3. Who could be the ancestors “who lurked behind rocks”?
4. What detail does the poet give and repeat that suggests that she is, in one sense, an ‘outsider’?
5. As a class you might like to discuss what the difference is between a matrilineal and a matriarchal society.





## Teen Letter

### *Konai Helu Thaman*

it's funny  
how questions  
keep coming without answers  
you'd think that the gods  
were careless-like

i want to know when i can go  
to town on my own  
or if i ought to say hello  
to so-and-so first  
or wait  
for him to speak to me

or why my friends  
are allowed to go  
to lucky eddies and traps<sup>1</sup>  
or roam around town  
on their own  
when i have to listen  
to mother and stay home

and can a girl get pregnant  
with just a kiss  
or lose popularity with the boys  
for not wanting to dance  
to slow tunes  
or beating them in class

---

1 Lucky Eddies and Traps are nightclubs in Suva, Fiji.



perhaps the problem lies  
with parents  
who have different standards  
while others have none at all  
their children often fall  
for the latest fads

other adults have no more secrets  
their unconsciousness exposed  
to us kids  
we can see and read  
what's going on inside  
their heads

we're not asking  
too much really  
to be happy or have fun  
we just want you  
to let us matter



## Thinking about the poem

1. In an earlier poem 'I Am Me', the "I" is confident about herself or himself and is older than a teenager. Make a list of questions that the teenager in Thaman's poem wants answers to. Talk about them in class, discussing also whether they are the sorts of questions that you are also asking.
2. There is a change in the poem at a point. At which stanza do you see a change?
3. What is the poet suggesting in Stanza 5?
4. What do you think is meant by "we can see and read/what's going on inside/their heads"?
5. What do the last two lines mean? And how do you think they are related to the first stanza?
6. Thaman has used no punctuation marks in this poem. Try reading the poem aloud (remember, there are no commas or full stops – don't try inserting them in your reading). How does a 'more breathless' reading reflect the teen's mind?





## Crash

*Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner*

By the side of a looming mountain my friend and I  
 staggered away  
 tiny and scared  
 from a silver beast  
 flipped over and smashed  
 to glass pieces  
 cold mortality dripping down my forehead  
 sliced skin flapping against my palm

flannel draped white samaritans blew smoke in my eyes  
 threw camouflage hunting jackets on me  
 hollered *WE*  
 pointing to themselves  
*calling 9-1-1! YOU*  
 pointing to me  
*bloody!*  
*Cold? Shiver shiver?*  
*How many fingers?*  
*Dos?*  
*Traayaz?*

Strapped  
 into a rolling ambulance  
 a sugar blond nurse  
 asked me how to spell my name  
 seven times  
 giggled every time  
 eyed me with suspicion  
*Are you Indian?*

In the hospital a male nurse  
 strung stitches



through the blooming wounds in my wrists  
the only remains  
of the passenger window  
His blue aloha shirt  
reminded me of home  
I wanted to tell him I wasn't from here  
I wanted to tell him I missed my mom  
I wanted to tell him I was scared  
of dying in someone else's country

As whimpers escaped from my lips  
he yanked the black thread just  
a little  
tighter  
sealing my voice into my wrists

At my friend's house  
I leaned against a porcelain shower stall  
yearned  
to be diluted  
into waters  
clear of color  
When I turned the knob of the shower off  
I suddenly remembered  
her entirely corn blond family

Desperate  
I searched the bathroom  
swept  
wiped  
scooped  
gathered  
my swirls of long curly black hair  
wary  
of leaving any  
trace



## Thinking about the poem

1. The poems we have looked at so far deal with the place of women in Pacific societies. What country do you think this poem is set in? Why?
2. Is the narrator of the poem from the country of the poem?
3. In Stanza 2, why are the people speaking in pidgin English? “Dos/Traayaz” are Spanish words. Why does the speaker change to Spanish?
4. Why is the person in the poem gathering up all the “long curly black hair”? Discuss the issue of ‘identity’ – in a foreign country as well as in your own.
5. In what way, or ways, is this poem different from ‘I Am Me’ that you read previously?





## Civilised Girl

*Jully Makini*

Cheap perfume  
Six inch heels  
Skin-tight pants  
Civilised girl

Steelwool hair  
Fuzzy and stiff  
Now soft as coconut husk  
Held by a dozen clips

Charcoal-black skin  
Painted red  
Bushy eyebrows  
Plucked and pencilled

Who am I?  
Melanesian, Caucasian or  
Half-caste?  
Make up your mind

Where am I going -  
Forward, backward, still?  
What do I call myself -  
Mrs. Miss or Ms.?

Why do I do this?  
Imitation  
What's wrong with it?  
Civilization.





## Thinking about the poem

1. In the last poem, 'Crash', we finished by talking about identity. This poem tackles the idea of 'identity' explicitly. As an individual assignment, answer the two questions that the poet asks in this poem: (a) "Where am I going?" and (b) "Why do I do this?" Afterwards, you can share your answers and discuss them.





## Woman Faces

*Tina Takashy*

Woman, what are you?

A beauty to adorn,  
A soother of pain,  
An elixir of desire,  
An inspiration abounds,

My woman galore.

Woman, who are you?

Daughter of your loins,  
Wife of man,  
Sister to many,  
Friend to all,

My solitary woman.

Woman, where are you?

In taro patches, cookhouses, and riverbanks,  
In homes, reproducing and producing,  
In communities, serving society's needs,  
In churches, obeying thy commandments,

My traditional woman.

Woman, why are you here?

To fulfil life-time prophecies,  
To justify man's existence,  
To shelter thy weaklings,  
To continue family lines,

My subservient woman.



Woman, what's left of you?

A beat-up shell covered with scars,  
A fading beauty once adorned,  
A homeless entity, trashed and pitied,  
A stranger among friends,

My destitute woman.

Woman, when will you?

Demand justice,  
Secure your rights,  
Empower yourself,  
Free yourself,

My woman-friend.



## Thinking about the poem

1. In this poem, the poet has used a question-and-answer technique. What is the function of the first five questions? Which line in each stanza sums up what the poet wants to say?
2. What is the function of the last question?
3. In the last stanza, Takashy ends with “My woman-friend”. Why do you think she uses the word “friend”?
4. As a class or in small groups, discuss each of the answers given in each stanza. Are the answers relevant to you? From your own experience or knowledge, can you add any new answers to the questions asked?
5. If you were asked, “Why do you think Takashy might have written this poem?”, what would you say?





## Sorry

*Anna Jane Vea*

Yesterday, you came to school and your eyes were bloody red  
 I asked to see your homework, but I should have asked if you cried instead  
 I knew you would lie and say you did not get enough sleep  
 I could have kept on asking until you opened up to me  
 Maybe, just maybe, if you knew that someone cared  
 You would feel that you could talk about the troubles in your hair  
 Whether your parents fought again, or your uncle died that morning  
 If a pervert on the bus scared you, or you broke up with your boyfriend  
 Whether it was big or small, I know it broke your heart  
 If I offered just a little glue, would it have kept you from falling apart?

Five years later, we are all big girls and university life is thrilling  
 But why does it feel like on your shoulders, heavy weights are resting?  
 I brush you off as lazy because of the dragging in your steps  
 I fail to even wonder whether it is due to lack of rest  
 No flickering thoughts of homesickness, loneliness or depression  
 There is a box labelled “short-term memories” in my head, and I just tuck you in it.  
 It takes less than a minute to grab your hand and ask “Are you okay?”  
 So *why* did I not do that for you on one of those days ...

Last night, I bumped into you but you did not recognize me  
 Well, my hair is a different colour now and there’s a growing sprout inside me  
 But it bothered me so deeply how much you looked the same  
 Only that your lines were sharper and somewhat less flesh on your frame  
 But I know it was you I saw, breathing ... alive  
 So why am I hearing news of a woman who took her life?  
 Why does she have the same name? Live in the same place you did?  
 Why does this hurt more when I think it could have been prevented?



I am sorry that I did not see the insincerity of your smile  
I am sorry we were not close enough for you to put me on speed dial  
I am sorry that I did not hear the emptiness in your laugh  
I am sorry for not caring to call you out on bluffs  
I am sorry that I did not ask “How are you?” nearly enough  
I am sorry that I did not think you would also have it rough

I am sorry for the moments when I could have held your hand  
But chose to spend it on pointing out all your flaws instead  
I am sorry for ignoring the S.O.S in your eyes  
For deceiving both of us that you were actually fine

I am sorry for being late, my friend  
For only realizing it now  
That one could still feel lonely  
Even amidst a crowd

Heed my words, all who hear me  
And look out for the signs  
Hold her hand, let him know  
That you care for their lives

I cannot carry you, and you cannot carry me  
But hand in hand, side by side  
This is how we can be  
Together, my friend, together



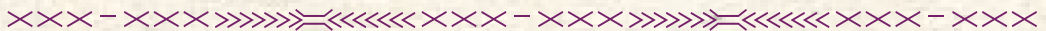
## Thinking about the poem

1. What sorts of “troubles in your hair” might the friend have? Did the narrator in the poem know?
2. What sort of glue is the narrator offering? What is this figure of speech called and do you think it is effective?
3. Stanza 2 is about the time when the two were at a university. What signs are there that her friend might be still unhappy?
4. Why do you think the narrator did not ask her friend what the matter was with her?
5. Why do you think the narrator says, “But it bothered me so deeply how much you looked the same”?
6. What are three ways that her friend hid her inner pain?
7. Explain these four lines in the poem: “I am sorry ... your hand” up to “For deceiving both ... actually fine”.
8. Explain how one can feel lonely in a crowd.
9. What solution is the poet offering in the last stanza.
10. As a class, discuss the different ways people can hide their pain. What can friends (and family) do to help such people?
11. Is suicide, especially by young people, a problem in your community? What do you think are the main causes of youth suicides and how can such young people be helped?





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The Dreamer  
Medium: Digital art



## SECTION 3

**Addressing Violence Against Women, Protecting  
Marginalised People**





## Violence

*Merilyn Tabi*

You give me a distorted face  
You give me crooked hands  
You give me black eyes  
You give me a broken skull  
You damage my health

Violence

You pollute my viability  
You contaminate my attitude  
You poison my relationship  
You driftnet off my love  
You damage my environment

Violence

You omitted my nomination  
You jealoused off my election  
You prevented my vote  
You drive my decision making  
You damage my participation

Violence

You burnt my certificates  
You scolded off my lectures  
You snarled at my tutor  
You hid my homework  
You damaged my education

Violence

You are violent  
You are oppressive  
You are careless  
You are irrespectable  
You are Violence.

## Thinking about the poem

1. The poet uses some really interesting and effective language. For example, try to explain the use of a metaphor in “You driftnet off my love”.
2. What does this line mean: “You jealoused off my election”? [This question and the next, dwells on the very idiosyncratic way Tahi has used some words. Consider whether a more conventional use of the words would have been better.]
3. Explain “You are irrespectable”.
4. Tahi is addressing “Violence” in this poem. But who or what does violence represent in this poem? Do you remember the technical term we use when a poet turns an abstract idea into a living form?
5. Are there any other forms of violence that Tahi has not mentioned? What are they?
6. In this poem, Tahi confronts violence head on. Go through the poem and identify the different types of violence against women. As a class, consider how the different types of violence impact on a woman and her relationships, her opportunities, her potential, and her future.
7. Go through your answers in Question 6, and discuss what the solution might be in each case and who has the responsibility to address it. Do you think there is one ‘big solution’ that could cover all the problems mentioned in the poem?





## Messed Up

*Nancy Gaselona Palmer*

I woke up with heavy eyes of sadness  
Watching the ceiling through my swollen black eye  
I lay there replaying the events  
In chronological order I lay each piece  
You said this, and I said this  
You did this, and I did this  
My brain was trying to figure out  
Why did that fist fly right at me  
Why didn't I duck? Or was I just a cow?  
What were the exact words that came with the fist?  
Or was it the fist before the words?  
I couldn't comprehend  
But one thing was for sure  
I was truly messed up!  
I carefully peeled each sorrow away  
Some in my head,  
Some on my bruises,  
Others were scars in the heart,  
I looked outside the window  
The light was too sensitive  
My eyes could barely open  
I closed them for a moment  
I hear thunder and rain



The patter numbed the pain  
And then it flooded  
Tears and rain flushed me outside,  
and the sky spoke to me, sit here lady, you need a wash,  
You need a whole new you!  
A transformation! A total shift!  
The rain poured and thundered and so was my heart  
The sun came up and so was the new me!



## Thinking about the poem

1. What is the “I” in the poem thinking about in the early part of the poem?
2. Why do you think the “I” in the poem is trying to reconstruct what happened?
3. Explain what you think the poet meant by “Or was I just a cow?”
4. Explain in your own words the four lines beginning with “I carefully peeled each sorrow away”.
5. What happens to the narrator of the poem when it starts to rain? Do you think the rain can be a symbol of something? If so, what?
6. What do you think the last line means? Do you think there will be a new “me”? Give your reason or reasons. [There is no right or wrong answer as long as your reason is sound!]
7. Do you find the poet has captured an important part of human behaviour – the way we analyse some event that has gone wrong? This can be a whole class discussion with students giving examples from their own experience when they have done similar types of analyses.





## Silence

*Sophia Jaban*

windows and doors banged shut  
muffled voices were heard  
whispers of pain,  
wounds remain

said it would never happen again  
I am sorry for the bruises  
gentle caress  
promise never to harass

there was no food in the house  
children couldn't go to school  
tiptoeing around,  
'cause he was asleep  
hope to God he doesn't wake up and start again

daddy said he would never do it again  
he is upset he was bad  
sorry he is extremely  
he'll make up to you some day.

That day never dawned  
yet many more little secrets  
threatened never to tell  
gnaw at my insides

The grains of time  
cannot remove the pain,  
the horror, the suffering



yet I am expected to forget  
be 'normal' I have been told  
watch your successful life unfold!

misty eyed I realise  
that one selfish man has destroyed  
the memories of childhood and life  
Will a liveable life materialise?

I am the one who can make it  
Try is all I can do  
And I most certainly will  
For he may have taken my childhood, my past  
he most certainly doesn't have  
my Will, Determination and Dreams.



## Thinking about the poem

1. The title of this poem is ‘Silence’. Who is silent?
2. Consider these words used by Jahan in Stanza 1: “banged”, “muffled”, “whispers”. Suppose you were standing outside the room or the house. Describe what you think happened, using the words mentioned above.
3. How would you explain “whispers of pain”?
4. Do you think that the poem is true only in this case that Jahan is describing? Give a reason for your answer.
5. In such instances where husbands abuse their wives physically, what effect could it have on their children? While you are thinking about this question, consider the research that shows that children of abusive fathers can grow up to be abusive themselves and some of these children have a lower school achievement and greater school expulsion rate. Is this true of Pacific communities also? Consider next how we can break this cycle. [This question is best done as a whole class.]
6. The poet talks of “the memories of childhood and life” destroyed. What do you think she means by this?
7. Read the last stanza and write your own personal response to it.
8. Returning to Question 1, who must not remain ‘silent’ if we are to make the situation for some women in our societies better?







## Sunglasses Indoors

*Jean Tekura Mason*

Sunglasses indoors –  
the badge of your womanhood,  
hides a multitude of sins

masks the fury  
which broke the furniture,  
the hard fist  
the black eye.

Shields you from knowing stares,  
gives you the courage  
to face each working day  
(somebody has to feed the kids),

covers the bruises  
on your arms  
and conceals the wounding of a family  
from one generation to the next.



## Thinking about the poem

1. Why is the second line of the poem ‘ironic’? [Remember ‘irony’ in the ‘Reading Poetry’ section?]
2. In comparison with the previous poem, this poem is more direct. Mention some of the events that are stated more explicitly in this poem.
3. What does “knowing stares” suggest to you? [After all, lots of people wear sunglasses.]
4. Explain the last line, especially in light of the last question in the previous poem.
5. Now pretend you are the ‘husband’ in this case. What are some thoughts going through your mind as you see your wife put on her sunglasses to hide the black eye from the public?





## Those Who Did Not Survive

*Nilesh Goundar*

Because she is a woman  
Not an equal  
Owned or possessed

Convinced she deserves the abuse  
With nowhere to go  
Financially dependent on her partner  
Duty bound to stay  
for the sake of the children;  
the honour of the family  
Custom, culture, religion, tradition  
Ashamed of being known as battered  
No confidence in her ability to cope on her own

But still in love  
Believing violence is part of love  
That it is really alcohol, poverty, stress, unemployment  
That if she changes herself;  
improves, behaves  
The abuse will stop

Forced to reconcile  
Threatened to endure  
Or the violence will worsen  
The cycle continues  
Family, friends, neighbours  
who heard the cries  
did not want to get involved;  
horrified but  
felt it was not their business



Unconfronted, the violence intensifies  
The pain increases  
Withdrawal, isolation, silence  
The threshold has long been crossed  
Bones break  
Tears mingle with bruises, beatings and blood  
A life ebbs away ...  
Because she is a woman



## Thinking about the poem

1. Here's a poem that summarises very well the many issues and observations that are made about women being abused by their husbands. We'll go through each stanza and see what aspect of the problem is being highlighted.
2. What is the point made in Stanza 1? What idea does the word "owned" raise in your mind?
3. What pressures are there on the woman not to leave her husband? Can any of these pressures be lessened or removed?
4. How does the woman explain the husband's behaviour? Discuss her reasons – "alcohol, poverty, stress, unemployment" – more fully in class. Do you think if these four factors causing problems were solved that it would stop violence against women? Give a reason for your answer.
5. Should family and friends intervene between a wife and a husband where violence is concerned?
6. One meaning of "a life ebbs away" is that the person is dying. Do you think this is what the poet meant by the second-last line?
7. This poem shows that there are many reasons why wife abuse may occur in a family. As a class, list all the factors. Then rearrange them so that you list them from what you think is the easiest problem to tackle to the hardest problem. For each item, make a list of suggestions that could help to overcome the problem. Then, in another column, put down all the things that can prevent any changes occurring in a household/society. [Note: consider also this: the perpetrator of abuse is a person with a will of their own. They CHOOSE to use violence. How can people help to change the perpetrator's values and behaviours?]





## No End

*Hilda Vukikomoala*

There is no end  
It is a cycle  
A regenerative being  
That feeds upon itself  
A concoction of anger,  
Revenge, power  
Weakness, love  
And hate  
A raging fire  
Consuming the conscience  
Pride is its fuel  
And there is no end  
However, it begins  
All the time  
A seed planted  
In feeble minds  
Fertilized by greed  
Rain is inconsistent  
But one thing is certain  
Its harvest

400 newly reported domestic violence cases in Suva



210,060 Syrian lives lost in civilian war

Over 500,000 West Papuans murdered

4486 US soldiers killed in Iraq

Over 100,000 Iraqi civilians killed

The list is endless

It covers our world

It is the dark cloud

Above our homes

There is no end

In the hunger for power

There is no end

When the objective is domination

Let it echo throughout the world

And in the minds

Of all

There is no victory in violence



## Thinking about the poem

[Here is a poem that goes beyond violence against women to violence against people – human rights abuses. This poem lends itself to a whole class (or group) discussion of the questions.]

1. The poem begins “There is no end”. As you read the poem you realise what there is no end to. What is it?
2. Do you think there is one reason for violence? What word in the first dozen lines gives you a clue to the answer?
3. The poet uses an extended metaphor to explain how violence begins. What is this metaphor? Do you think it captures the essence of violence?
4. Look at the last line of the poem. Can you relate it to the title of the poem? How?
5. How do you think this poem can be categorised as a poem about ‘human rights abuses’? Discuss.







## I Love You

*Rebecca Tobo Olul*

Those were the words on her messenger screen  
 Seriously, she barely knows you, jerk!  
 And you're already sprouting "I love you"?  
 Doesn't he know she has met many like him?  
 Those who use these words to get what they want.  
 Words as sweet as ripe mangoes in season  
 Okay maybe overripe mangoes just about to go off!  
 She is 25 turning 40 years old.  
 This is what people tell her.  
 They tell her she is complex.  
 She wonders if its complex like a wide woven Futunese mat  
 Or a highly strung Ambae basket almost PNG-like in texture.  
 If only she were naïve  
 Like a girl who just had her *kaliku*<sup>1</sup>  
 After 'seeing' her first period and coming of womanhood  
 Then maybe the "I love you" would be taken differently.  
 For now this girl of 25 turning 40 unfriends him  
 And blocks him on messenger!

<sup>1</sup> *Kaliku* in Tannese, the language of Tanna Island in Vanuatu, is a traditional celebration of girls when they see their first menstruation as they enter into womanhood.



## Thinking about the poem

1. This is a poem with a more modern setting. What gives it the modern feel?
2. What does Olul compare words with? Do you think it is a good comparison?
3. In the next line she talks of “overripe mangoes”. In what sense can words be like “overripe mangoes”?
4. How can a person be “25 turning 40”? [Hint: have you heard of the expression “old head on young shoulders”?]
5. Following on from Question 4, why is this woman not “naïve” like the girl “who had just had her kaliku”?
6. What is the message that Olul wants to convey in this poem?





## Hear Us, the Women of PNG

*Linda Passingan*

Hear us, the women of PNG,  
Stop the discrimination and violence against us.  
We, Papua New Guinean Women are ignored,  
undervalued and exploited.

We are hardworking, but where is our reward?  
We bear many children and maternal deaths are all too  
common.

We are often ill and undernourished  
we are frequently beaten and raped  
but with little legal redress.

Many of us are illiterate with little opportunity  
to benefit from formal education.

We women are strong and crucial  
in upholding the social and cultural life of PNG.

We must be incorporated into the emerging social forms  
if our society is to survive.

Let the women and men of PNG,  
the government and churches listen.

Stop the violence and abuse of women in PNG  
Stop the beatings, the rape and killings.



Educate women to read and write their own lives,  
Recognise and value women's roles  
and contributions, in every culture,

in the child rearing and daily tasks.

Share political, economic and social benefits with us,  
as equal partners in development.

Listen to us and be with us  
in the development of the nation.



## Thinking about the poem

1. This poem is a strong, direct plea for women to be treated more equally and allowed to take a greater role in the social and political life of the nation. Who is the poem addressing? Make a list of all areas that Passingan has listed where women are not treated as they should be.
2. Now go through the list and put down how you would go about making women's lives better in your community. Share your ideas with each other and the class.
3. Do you think the development of a strong Pacific society in the twenty-first century needs both men and women to work together as equals? [You could have a debate about this topic in the class.]



## The Mother of All Pain

*Jean Tekura Mason*

They say the pain of giving birth  
is the worst pain there is,  
contractions and tears,  
a first-time mother's initial fears  
are overshadowed by the joy of the new arrival  
and are soon forgotten.

The widow who shrieks and pulls out her hair,  
blackens her eyes with her own fists  
at the death of her beloved husband,  
has felt the worst pain –  
grief at the loss of a loved one,  
but the passage of time eases her pain.

The man who wails and beats his chest,  
bangs his head on a wall till it bleeds  
at the death of an only son,  
has felt the worst pain –  
grief of a parent at the loss of a child,  
but the birth of another child eases his pain.

The mute girl with hurt in her eyes,  
butchered hair and other self-mutilations  
screams her secret pain  
her father's surreptitious visits, her mother's pretence,  
betrayal by those she trusted  
is the worst pain  
because it never fades.



## Thinking about the poem

1. What does the expression “mother of all pain” mean? [You might have heard the expression "mother of all wars".]
2. What are three different types of pain that Mason talks about that can eventually be made less painful?
3. What is the pain that “never fades”?
4. What other self-mutilations in these circumstances have you heard of?
5. Choose an expression in the last stanza that you particularly like for conveying a vivid picture to you, and then explain how it does this for you.



## It Is Good

*Anonymous*

### It Is Good

He said I was made in his image  
 3 parts – the Body, Soul and Spirit  
 When my home was ready, He got down and His hands dirty  
 Shaped my form from the dust of the ground  
 My feet, my hands, my face and then He made  
 Himself even lower, on his knees he bent, over my dead being he towered and  
 lowered His body  
 Brought his face even closer and he breathed  
 The life of that breath, held my heart in cardiac arrest  
 The windows to my soul opened and behold the maker, creator of the galaxies  
 His face is the first thing my eyes see  
 He said IT IS GOOD

I needed a helper, so he went ahead and made her  
 I called her woman because woo man  
 How could a creature with so much beauty  
 Have been created from a rib inside me  
 I got to say He did a good job, she was flawless I heard him say  
 IT IS GOOD

Humanity was born and I'm sure something went wrong  
 Because if we were made in His image then why is my life  
 So darn confusing  
 It's like I have a hard time simply  
 to live  
 I'm on a never ending search for a new job, new friends, new love, new  
 happiness  
 I was introduced to sex before I even turned six





The images when I think of them make me sick  
To my stomach  
When I should have been playing with my friends  
My friends' family members were playing with my members  
Leaving me counting the numbers of scars that are now etched so deep into  
my heart  
It's an experience truly hard to set apart  
Correct me if I'm wrong but I thought HE said  
IT IS GOOD

Fast forward she came home from the doctor  
And her face said that it was over  
The sickness has spread so now all that was left  
All that stood between life and death was the hope that hung on her shoulders  
That maybe Kemo would help  
One operation after another  
I could have lost my mother  
I may as well have because

Fast forward  
And everything I knew to be mine was shattered  
When I picked up the phone and her voice on the other side  
Was not the voice of my mother  
It was the voice of another  
Woman bringing comfort to the fleshly desires of my father who had somehow  
sadly forgotten  
That he has a wife and four children  
My home turned from safe haven to every other weekend a tavern  
And my life just when I thought was right began to take a dive  
I thought he said  
IT IS GOOD



Fast forward  
Today my face says  
Everything is okay  
My smile pushes all the negativity away  
My heart beats for humanity  
Pumping out the love that not so long ago saved me I live, I love, I laugh, I  
breathe the breath that holds my heart in a place of rest  
But how is this even possible  
To crawl up out from under my shame and stand on top of the world  
unashamed  
This story has a powerful end  
So I'll tell it to you the next time we meet my friend  
But until then  
I am rest assured that he was right when he said  
IT IS GOOD



## Thinking about the poem

[This poem is best done in the class as an oral activity rather than as a written exercise.]

1. The poet has used a religious theme to get a message across. What part of the Bible is the poet referring to in Stanzas 1 and 2?
2. Where do the words “IT IS GOOD” (or very similar) come from?
3. In the third stanza, the poet introduces a new idea: “something went wrong”. What is this in contrast to the first two stanzas?
4. The poet quite cleverly introduces something traumatic (very bad) that occurred to him (or the narrator in the poem) when he was young. What was it? And who committed this bad act? (And did you notice the poet’s play with words: “family members” and “members”?)
5. What is the consequence of this abuse as a child? Quote at least three lines that sum up the effects.
6. Now you can try to explain the lines:  
“... but I thought HE said  
IT IS GOOD”
7. Your answer to Question 6 should help you to understand Stanza 4. Summarise briefly what is said in this stanza.
8. The poet uses clever words to link Stanza 4 to Stanza 5. What is the line that links the two stanzas?
9. What is the poet talking about in Stanza 5?
10. Explain the line “My home turned from safe haven ... weekend tavern” (“every other weekend” might give you a clue).
11. What words does the poet use to signal that time has passed? What does the imagery remind you of?

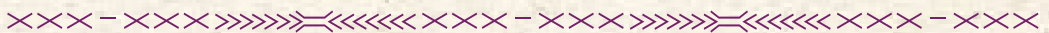


12. What word do you think best describes the feelings in the last stanza: (a) pessimistic, (b) fearful, (c) optimistic, (d) shame? Why?
13. Now look at the subtle way the poet has used the words “IT IS GOOD”. In which stanza is there a change?
14. Further thinking/discussion: this poem is about child sexual abuse and the scars such abuse can leave on a person’s life. Physical and psychological abuse (e.g. always telling a child she or he is no good, or stupid, etc.) can also leave scars on people’s lives and make their lives, as the poet says, “so darn confusing”.
  - a. Do these forms of abuse (including the one that Mason talks about in her poem) occur in your society?
  - b. How do you think we can minimise such problems in our society?
  - c. Jesus says in Matthew Chapter 18, Verse 6, “And if anyone hurts the conscience of one of these little ones, that believe in me, he had better have been drowned in the depths of the sea, with a millstone hung about his neck”. Is this a solution?





Johntos John, © 2020, Republic of the Marshall Islands  
Nuclear Justice  
Medium: Acrylic on jaki (Marshallese pandanus mat)



## SECTION 4

### Social Justice More Broadly, Including Nuclear Justice and Climate Justice



## My Blood

*Konai Helu Thaman*

You tell me that I've been 'exploited'  
And that I must rebel NOW;  
You tell me that I must be their equal  
You tell me that if I don't  
I am sick, apathetic and useless.

But why won't you face the truth?  
Why are you telling me this?  
You ride a big car, just like them  
You booze, just like them  
You love, just like them  
You slaughter, cheat, and lie, just like them  
Why should I hate them and not YOU?

You are a fraud  
Squeezing the dry earth  
For something to ease your guilt  
Why won't you admit it?  
You have lost your carefree nature  
Your easygoing manner  
Your humanity and sense of balance;  
You have made academia, fame and money  
Your gods  
And you have let them rule you –  
This you wanted all along.

Come, face your dilemma now, brother  
For your pompous friends won't help you  
They have too much to lose;



Your statesmen friends can't help you  
They suffer from the same identity epidemic,  
Why don't you give up?

My brother . . .  
My problem is not 'exploitation'  
Or unequal pay, or unawareness;  
My problem is that I  
Have been betrayed and trampled on  
By my own blood,  
Don't forget YOU are their product  
And YOU must sell.



## Thinking about the poem

1. What does “My Blood” mean in this poem? What is the technical term we use when a poet uses a part of something to represent the whole?
2. Who do you think is the “you” in this poem? Someone in politics? in business? in the army? or police? or a university? What in the poem gives you the clue?
3. What, according to Thaman, has the ‘you’ become? Who do you think the ‘other’ is?
4. Who do you think might be the “pompous friends” and “statesmen friends”?
5. Explain the last two lines.
6. Is this poem about exploitation? If so, by whom?







## Peace signs

*Bro. Celestine Kulagoe*

A star moved resolutely  
    across the sky  
    from east to west  
followed by men  
to the city of David  
    where their minds were  
    from anxiety released  
in a cradle of peace.

A mushroom sprouts from  
    an arid Pacific atoll  
disintegrates into space  
leaving only a residue of might  
    to which for an illusory  
    peace and security  
    man clings.

In the calm of early morning  
    the third day after  
love found joy  
    in an empty tomb  
the wooden cross of disgrace  
transformed into a symbol  
    of love service  
    peace.



In the heat of the afternoon lull  
the UN flag flutters  
hidden from sight by  
national banners  
under which  
sit men with clenched fists  
signing peace  
treaties.



## Thinking about the poem

1. The Bro. in the name of the poet stands for 'Brother'. He belonged to a Catholic religious order. This should help you to understand the events he has contrasted. What are these events? [It would help you if you know what a mushroom cloud refers to.]
2. The wise men in the New Testament followed a star to get to Bethlehem. What does Baby Jesus give these wise men, according to Kulagoe?
3. When a nuclear bomb is exploded, a mushroom-shaped cloud forms in the sky. Does the poet think that it will bring peace?
4. What is the third stanza referring to?
5. What is meant by "symbol of love, service peace"?
6. By contrast, many years after the testing of atomic bombs in the Pacific, have they become a symbol of peace? What words does Kulagoe use in the last stanza that suggest that the bomb is not a symbol of peace?
7. Notice how the poet has played upon words in his title. What are the different meanings one can take from the title?
8. If you do not know much about nuclear testing in the Pacific, do a google search and learn about it, and how it affected and continues to affect many Pacific peoples. Do you think they have a right to justice for the harm caused?





## No Islands in the Sun, Just Misters

*Albert Wendt*

Only a stony-eyed boy asking,  
'Hey, Mister, you got five cent?'

There are no islands in the sun.  
Only a bulletproofed Mister replying,  
'Hey, kid, bugger off  
You're dirtying my limousine!'

There are no islands in the sun.  
Only my perceptive daughter asking,  
'Hey, dad, how come you're a Mister?'



## Thinking about the poem

1. Before you can understand the title of this poem, your teacher needs to play you a song called 'Island in the Sun' by Harry Belafonte. [You can find it easily on YouTube.] In this song you get the feeling that the island is a paradise.
2. Who is the little boy asking for money? And what does that tell you about life on this island?
3. In the second stanza, identify all the words that Wendt uses to give you a picture of an island that might no longer 'care and share'.
4. What is the irony in this poem as suggested in the third stanza?
5. Is there a message in this poem? What is it?





## AmneSIA

*Teresia Teaiwa*

get real  
we were always  
just stepping stones  
erich von daniken  
saw the footprints of the gods  
chris connery  
saw the trademarks of capitalism  
who's gonna give a damn if they don't/can't remember  
that the whole of the donut is filled with coconuts  
they're after american pie in the east  
and some kind of zen in the west  
east and west are of course relative  
the rim of our basin  
is overflowing with kava  
but the basin of their rim  
is empty  
they take their kava in capsules  
so it's easy to forget  
that there's life and love and learning  
between  
asia and america  
between  
asia and america  
there's an ocean  
and in this ocean  
the stepping stones  
are  
getting real



## Thinking about the poem

1. Look at the language in which the poem is written. It's casual, spoken language. What does the oral expression "get real" mean and to whom is it addressed?
2. You need to do some internet searching to find out about Erich von Däniken and Chris Connery and what they have said (von Däniken talks about alien – extra-terrestrial – influences in human affairs, and Chris Connery talks about economics and China).
3. What are "stepping stones" and what does Teaiwa mean here?
4. The "American pie" and "zen" represent something else. What is the point the poet is making in the two lines with those words?
5. Explain what the poet is saying in the four lines beginning "the rim" and ending with "is empty". [Pay special attention to the two personal pronouns used there.]
6. Similarly, explain the lines beginning "they take their kava" and ending with "America" – the line about life, love and learning should give you a clue.
7. Poetry often works by not being very explicit. Poets often use words that will have multiple meanings so that you get many meanings at the same time. Keeping this in mind, explain the last three lines of the poem.
8. Now you can look at the title of the poem again. Can you see a number of meanings in the title also? Who is suffering from amnesia? Do you think the title is very clever? If you do, explain why.
9. What do you think is the message of this poem?





## Development Haiku 1

*Nilesh Goundar*

gentle coconut palms  
tidal waves of development  
my island staggers

### Thinking about the poem

1. Identify the two images/ideas the haiku juxtaposes or puts together.
2. Identify the figure of speech used in “my island staggers”.
3. What is the main point of this haiku?
4. As a class or in small groups, discuss one development that you think is not good for your island home. Give reasons why you think so. Then consider what might be a solution (or solutions) for this particular challenge.







## Development Haiku 3



*Nilesh Goundar*

prosperity you  
exacerbated poverty me  
development for all

### Thinking about the poem

1. Who do you think might be the “you” and “me” in this haiku?
2. What is the main message that the poet wants to convey?
3. The previous haiku questioned whether developments were sustainable (i.e. capable of being supported long term). In this haiku, the poet is asking another question: is development fair to all? Choose one development in your country that you know about and that you think does not provide an equitable or fair outcome for most people. Why do you think this? What can be done to make that development more equitable?





## History Project

*Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner*

At fifteen I decide  
to do my history project  
on nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands  
time to learn my own history

I weave through book after article after website  
all on how the U.S. military once used  
my island home  
for nuclear testing

I sift through political jargon  
tables of nuclear weapons  
with names like Operation Bravo  
Crossroads  
and Ivy

quotes from american leaders like  
*90, 000 people are out there. Who  
gives a damn?*

I'm not mad  
I already knew this

I glance at a photograph  
of a boy, peeled skin  
arms legs suspended  
a puppet  
next to a lab coat lost  
in his clipboard

I read firsthand accounts  
of what we call



jelly babies  
tiny beings with no bones  
skin – red as tomatoes  
the miscarriages gone unspoken  
the broken translations

*I never told my husband  
I thought it was my fault  
I thought  
there must be something  
wrong  
inside me*

I flip through snapshots  
of american marines and nurses branded  
white with bloated grins sucking  
beers and tossing beach balls along  
our shores  
and my islander ancestors, cross-legged  
before a general listening  
to his fairy tale  
about how it's

*for the good of mankind*  
to hand over our islands  
let them blast  
radioactive energy  
into our sleepy coconut trees  
our sagging breadfruit trees  
our busy fishes that sparkle like new sun  
into our coral reefs  
brilliant as an aurora borealis woven  
beneath a glassy sea.

*God will thank you they told us*



yea  
as if God Himself  
ordained  
those powerful flakes  
to drift  
onto our skin hair eyes  
to seep into our bones

We mistook radioactive fallout  
for snow

*God will thank you they told us*

like God's just been  
waiting  
for my people  
to vomit  
all of humanity's sins  
onto impeccable white shores  
gleaming  
like the cross burned  
into our open  
scarred palms

at one point in my research  
I stumble on a photograph  
of goats  
tied to american ships  
bored and munching on tubs of grass



At the bottom a caption read

*Goats and pigs were left on naval ships as test subjects.*

*Thousands*

*of letters flew in from america*

*protesting*

*animal abuse.*

At 15

I want radioactive energy megatons of tnt and a fancy degree

anything and everything I could ever need

to send ripples of death through a people who put goats

before human beings

so their skin

can shrivel

beneath the glare

of hospital room lights

three generations later

as they watch their grandfather/aunty/cousin's life drip

across that same

black

screen

knots

of knuckles

tied

to steel beds

cold

and absent

of any breath



But I'm only  
15

so I finish my project  
graph my people's death by cancer  
on flow charts  
in 3-D  
gluestick my ancestors' voice  
onto a posterboard I brought from office max  
staple tables screaming  
the 23 millions of dollars stuffed  
into our mouths  
generation

after generation

after generation

and at the top  
I spray painted in bold stencilled yellow  
FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND

and entered it in the school district-wide competition called  
History Day

my parents were quietly proud  
and so was my teacher  
and when the three balding white judges  
finally  
came around to my project  
one of them looked at it and said

*Yea . . .*

*but it wasn't really  
for the good of mankind, though  
was it?*

and I lost.



## Thinking about the poem

1. You will notice that this poem looks different. It is because the poet, Jetñil-Kijiner, believes that the shape of a poem is part of poetry. Above all, she wants her poems to be read aloud. For this reason, you might also like to listen to her reciting her poetry. A video of her reading this poem is at this YouTube site: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHV4L3nP3uo>

Alternatively, you can go the poet's site where this (and videos of other poems) can be found: <https://jkijiner.wordpress.com/video-poems/>

2. The earlier poem of Kulagoe mentioned 'nuclear testing' in the Pacific. Here's a writer whose country was directly involved in the testing. What device does Jetñil-Kijiner use to discuss issues of social justice and/or human rights in this poem?
3. Look at these lines (and ones before and after): "I'm not mad/I already knew this". What do you think she already knew?
4. Sometimes the horror of the situation can be shown by making it very impersonal. Who or what is "lab coat" and do you remember what this poetical device is called? Why is it particularly appropriate in the context of what the poet is trying to say?
5. What does "lost in his clipboard" suggest to you? [It might be related to the quote earlier about "90 000 people ...".]
6. What do you think caused "jelly babies"?
7. The poet uses words of women who blamed themselves. Were they to be blamed? Why?
8. Poems become very effective through the use of contrast. After the sick boy and "jelly babies" what picture does the poet create for us?
9. Why does the poet say that the "general" is telling a "fairy tale"?
10. Do you think that Jetñil-Kijiner thinks the testing was "for the good of mankind"? This is an example of what? [It starts with 'i'.]
11. What are the sparkling fishes compared to?



12. Why do you think the poet mentions “God”?
13. Why are the lines in the caption to a photo a very powerful way to highlight how a much bigger nation cared so little for the people of a smaller Pacific Island country?
14. In the stanza after the caption about goats, the “I” shows her anger. In your own words, write down what she thinks she would like to see happen.
15. What is the poet referring to by \$23m “stuffed/into our mouths”?
16. What was the heading of the project of the 15-year-old? Do you think it is an appropriate heading for her project?
17. Why did the “I” in the poem not win the history competition? And what is your reaction to the comments by one of the judges?
18. By now you will probably begin to see what a powerful poem this is, in its message. And the power of the poem comes from the use of words – right words, descriptive words, words that have many meanings or have a strong emotional meaning. Go through the poem again (reading it aloud, of course), this time looking at the choice of words made by Jetñil-Kijiner, and discuss how you find them effective in the context.







## Sonnet XVII

«-» ————— »-»  
*Craig Santos Perez*

I don't love you as if you were rare earth metals, diamonds,  
or reserves of crude oil that propagate war:  
I love you as one loves most vulnerable things,  
urgently, between the habitat and its loss.

I love you as the seed that doesn't sprout but carries  
the heritage of our roots, secured, within a vault,  
and thanks to your love the organic taste that ripens  
from the fruit lives sweetly on my tongue.

I love you without knowing how, or when, the world will end-  
I love you naturally without pesticides or pills-  
I love you like this because we won't survive any other way,  
except in this form in which humans and nature are kin,  
so close that your emissions of carbon are mine,  
so close that your sea rises with my heat.



## Thinking about the poem

1. A sonnet is a poem that has 14 lines. This form is traditionally used to discuss two seemingly opposite ideas, sometimes presented as two stanzas (eight and six lines) or four stanzas (3 x four lines and 1 x two lines), or wholly as one stanza of 14 lines. Your teacher in your regular poetry/literature class will no doubt talk about this form. The focus here will be on the content.
2. Who is “you” in the first line?
3. Why do you think the poet chose to mention only three things, starting with “earth metals”? What do these three things represent to human beings?
4. Explain Stanza 2 in your own words. [Identifying “you” or “your love” will help you to understand this stanza.]
5. In Stanza 3, when the poet refers to “pesticides”, what is he thinking of?
6. In the last two lines, Perez links his poem to one of the main issues that is confronting many Pacific Island nations. What is this issue?
7. What is the message that the poet conveys in the poem?





## Dear Matafele Peinam

*Kathy Jetn̄il-Kijiner*

*[This poem was 'performed' at the 2014 Opening Ceremony of the United Nations Climate Summit in New York.]*

Dear Matafele Peinam,

You are a seven month old sunrise of gummy smiles  
you are bald as an egg and bald as the Buddha  
you are thighs that are thunder  
shrieks that are lightning  
so excited for bananas, hugs and  
our morning walks past the lagoon

Dear Matafele Peinam,

I want to tell you about that lagoon  
that lucid, sleepy lagoon  
lounging against the sunrise

Men say that one day  
that lagoon will devour you

They say it will gnaw at the shoreline  
chew at the roots of your breadfruit trees  
gulp down rows of your seawalls,  
and crunch your island's shattered bones  
They say you, your daughter  
and your granddaughter too  
will wander  
rootless  
with only  
a passport  
to call home



Dear Matafele Peinam,

Don't cry  
Mommy promises you

no one  
will come and devour you

no greedy whale of a company sharking through political seas  
no backwater bullying of businesses with broken morals  
no blindfolded bureaucracies gonna push  
this mother ocean over  
the edge

no one's drowning, baby

no one's moving  
no one's losing  
their homeland  
no one's gonna become  
a climate change refugee

or should I say  
no one else

to the Carteret Islanders of Papua New Guinea  
and to the Taro Islanders of the Solomon Islands  
I take this moment  
to apologize to you  
we are drawing the line  
here

Because baby we are going to fight

your mummy daddy



bubu<sup>1</sup> jimma<sup>2</sup> your country and your president too  
we will all fight

and even though there are those  
hidden behind platinum titles  
who like to pretend  
that we don't exist  
that the Marshall Islands  
Tuvalu  
Kiribati  
Maldives  
Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines  
floods of Pakistan, Algeria, Columbia  
and all the hurricanes, earthquakes, and tidalwaves  
didn't exist

still  
there are those  
who see us

hands reaching out  
fists raising up  
banners unfurling  
megaphones booming  
and we are

canoes blocking coal ships

the radiance of solar villages

the rich clean soil of the farmer's past

---

1 Grandmother.

2 Grandfather.



petitions blooming from teenage fingertips

families biking, recycling, reusing,  
engineers dreaming, designing, building,  
artists painting, dancing, writing,  
and we are spreading the word

and there are thousands  
out on the street  
marching with signs  
hand in hand  
chanting for change NOW

and they are marching for you, baby  
they're marching for us

because we deserve  
to do more  
than just  
survive  
we deserve  
to thrive

Dear Matafele Peinam

you are eyes heavy  
with drowsy weight  
so just close those eyes, baby  
and sleep in peace

because we won't let you down

you'll see



## Thinking about the poem

1. In a previous poem, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner used the device of writing a history project to discuss the misery created by the atomic testing in her islands. This poem is written like a letter. Who is the letter addressed to? [Remember to read this poem aloud.]
2. The first stanza about the baby is full of unusual language. Identify similes and metaphors that the poet has used and comment on how appropriate you think they are.
3. Throughout the poem the poet repeats “Dear Matafele Peinam”. What is the effect of this?
4. Compare and contrast the stanza beginning with “I want to tell you ...” and the next two stanzas that follow. [It is a comparison between the present and the future.]
5. What will be the result of gnawing and crunching that the poet mentions?
6. The stanza “no greedy whale of a company ...” is full of meaning. Write a paragraph explaining what this stanza is saying.
7. Explain the expression “climate refugee”. Who are mentioned in the poem as having become climate refugees already?
8. What is Jetñil-Kijiner referring to in the stanza beginning with “and even though there are those”?
9. Similarly, who are being referred to in the stanzas following the one mentioned in Question 8?
10. Each of the actions that “we” are taking is given a separate one-line stanza. First, say what the action is and then discuss what the effect of the one-line stanzas is in this poem.
11. What is the point the poet is making in the stanza beginning “families biking”?
12. In your own words, write a paragraph that shows what you think this poem is advocating, or, in other words, what the message is that the poet is trying to convey.



13. Read the poem aloud, around the class, if you want, and enjoy the language in which the poet has expressed her ideas. Then, if you can, go to this website, which has the poet’s recitation at the United Nations meeting. If you have the facilities, connect a computer to a projector and show it on a larger screen: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=95&v=mc\\_lgE7TBSY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=95&v=mc_lgE7TBSY)
14. Finally, as a class, discuss what can be done to minimise the impact of climate change on small island nations. Who needs to take what actions – governments, companies, each one of us?

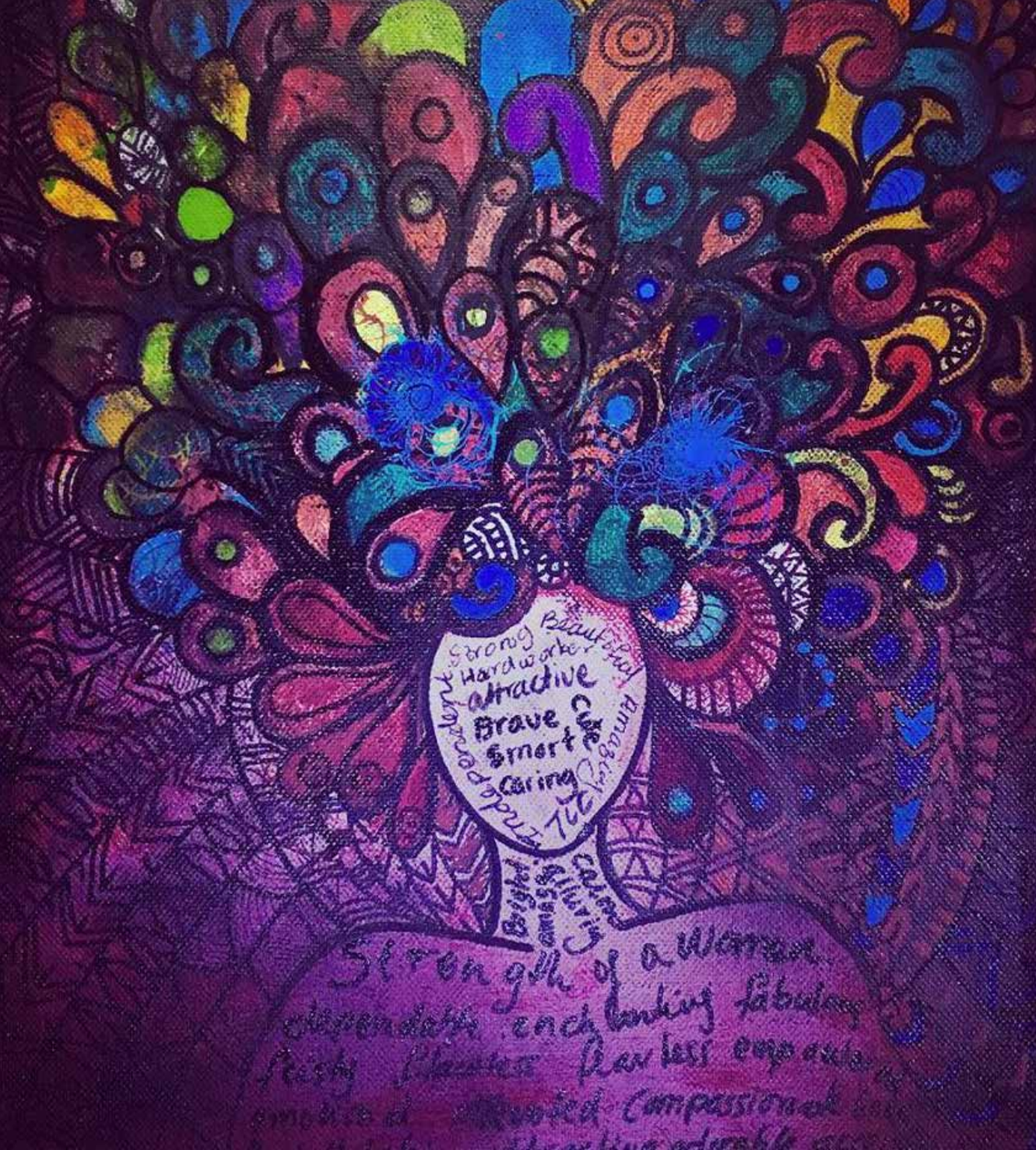






## THINKING ABOUT THE POEMS YOU HAVE READ

1. You will probably need to read the poems again to remind yourself what they were saying. Can you see that these poems are all dealing with some aspect of human rights and justice? You should now have a richer understanding of the term 'human rights'. Perhaps your teacher can put down all your ideas on the whiteboard/blackboard so that you can talk about the issues of human rights. In your discussion, you should also consider who – the government, communities, individuals? – should address these issues.
2. Consider also the difference between 'rights' and 'obligations'.
3. Now you can discuss how these ideas you have put on the blackboard/whiteboard can be related to your own life. What sorts of behaviours must you show that tell people that you care for their rights?



Joseph Hing © 2019, Fiji  
I Look at My Mum  
Medium: Acrylic on canvas





## Glossary

<b>Advocate</b>	An advocate is somebody who believes in something, such as a cause or aim, and educates his or her community to also support it. Example: A male advocate against violence against women talks to his community about building safer communities where there is no violence.
<b>Dignity</b>	Being worthy of honour or respect. Example: We must treat our elders with dignity.
<b>Discrimination</b>	When one group of people is treated differently from another group of people and is not given the same opportunities or the same rights. Example: Not hiring women for a job just because they are women is discrimination.
<b>Duty bearers</b>	The institutions (such as police, schools, hospitals) that are responsible for protecting people's human rights.
<b>Femininity/feminine</b>	The traits that society considers appropriate and acceptable for women.
<b>Gender</b>	The behaviours and attributes that society considers appropriate or acceptable for women and men.
<b>Gender equality</b>	The belief that women and men are of equal value and are entitled to the same rights, choices and opportunities.
<b>Gender identity</b>	A person's internal idea of themselves as a man, a woman, or both, or neither.
<b>Gender inequality</b>	The unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men in society resulting from women being less valued than men.
<b>Gender roles</b>	The roles (including jobs, responsibilities and activities undertaken) that society considers acceptable for men and women.



<b>Human rights</b>	The basic freedoms and protections that all human beings are entitled to.
<b>Inclusion</b>	Involving all people, such as women, men, older people, people with disabilities and youth. Example: The organisation wanted to have an inclusive consultation about their next project, so they helped transport people to the meeting place, made sure the meeting was at a time when everyone could attend, and then visited the homes of those who could not attend.
<b>Kastom</b>	Our culture, way of life, beliefs and values. Example: It is our kastom to have special feasts for celebrations.
<b>LGBTQI</b>	Short for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex: an umbrella term for different sexual orientations and gender identities.
<b>Marginalised</b>	Groups of people who generally do not enjoy access to rights, resources and opportunities on the same level as others, and so may not fully participate in life in our communities. Example: People with disabilities are sometimes marginalised and left out of community activities.
<b>Masculinity/masculine</b>	The traits that society considers appropriate and acceptable for men.
<b>Power</b>	The ability to achieve or influence change.
<b>Rights holders</b>	All of the people who are entitled to human rights (i.e. everyone).
<b>Sex</b>	The biological and physical characteristics that males and females are born with.
<b>Social norm</b>	Socially accepted behaviours for men and women.
<b>Status</b>	A person's value in relation to other people, as defined by a society.





## United Nations

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

#### *Simplified Version<sup>1</sup>*

All people everywhere have the same human rights, which no one can take away. This is the basis of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This declaration affirms the dignity and worth of all people, and the equal rights of women and men. The rights described here are the common standard for all people everywhere. Each person and every nation is asked to support the understanding and respect for these rights, and to take steps to make sure that they are recognised and observed everywhere, for all people.

1. **We Are All Born Free & Equal.** We are all born free. We all have our own thoughts and ideas. We should all be treated in the same way.
2. **Don't Discriminate.** These rights belong to everybody, whatever our differences.
3. **The Right to Life.** We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety.
4. **No Slavery.** Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone our slave.
5. **No Torture.** Nobody has any right to hurt us or to torture us.
6. **You Have Rights No Matter Where You Go.** I am a person just like you!
7. **We're All Equal Before the Law.** The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.

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1 This simplified version of the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been created especially for young people by Youth for Human Rights International (YHRI), a non-profit organisation founded in 2001 by Dr Mary Shuttleworth, an educator born and raised in apartheid South Africa, where she witnessed first-hand the devastating effects of discrimination and the lack of basic human rights.



8. **Your Human Rights Are Protected by Law.** We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly.
9. **No Unfair Detainment.** Nobody has the right to put us in prison without good reason and keep us there, or to send us away from our country.
10. **The Right to Trial.** If we are put on trial this should be in public. The people who try us should not let anyone tell them what to do.
11. **We're Always Innocent Till Proven Guilty.** Nobody should be blamed for doing something until it is proven. When people say we did a bad thing we have the right to show it is not true.
12. **The Right to Privacy.** Nobody should try to harm our good name. Nobody has the right to come into our home, open our letters, or bother us or our family without a good reason.
13. **Freedom to Move.** We all have the right to go where we want in our own country and to travel as we wish.
14. **The Right to Seek a Safe Place to Live.** If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.
15. **Right to a Nationality.** We all have the right to belong to a country.
16. **Marriage and Family.** Every grown-up has the right to marry and have a family if they want to. Men and women have the same rights when they are married, and when they are separated.
17. **The Right to Your Own Things.** Everyone has the right to own things or share them. Nobody should take our things from us without a good reason.
18. **Freedom of Thought.** We all have the right to believe in what we want to believe, to have a religion, or to change it if we want.



19. **Freedom of Expression.** We all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think, and to share our ideas with other people.
20. **The Right to Public Assembly.** We all have the right to meet our friends and to work together in peace to defend our rights. Nobody can make us join a group if we don't want to.
21. **The Right to Democracy.** We all have the right to take part in the government of our country. Every grown-up should be allowed to choose their own leaders.
22. **Social Security.** We all have the right to affordable housing, medicine, education, and childcare, enough money to live on and medical help if we are ill or old.
23. **Workers' Rights.** Every grown-up has the right to do a job, to a fair wage for their work, and to join a trade union.
24. **The Right to Play.** We all have the right to rest from work and to relax.
25. **Food and Shelter for All.** We all have the right to a good life with the basics of food, water, shelter, health care and necessary social services. Mothers and children, people who are old, unemployed or disabled, and all people have the right to be cared for.
26. **The Right to Education.** Education is a right. Primary school should be free. We should learn about the United Nations and how to get on with others. Our parents can choose what we learn.
27. **Participation in Cultural Life.** We all have the right to our own way of life, our culture, and to enjoy the good things that culture, art, science and learning bring. Copyright is a special law that protects one's own artistic creations and writings; others cannot make copies without permission.



28. **A Fair and Free World.** There must be proper order so we can all enjoy rights and freedoms in our own country and all over the world.

29. **Responsibility.** We have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.

30. **No One Can Take Away Your Human Rights.**

The above articles are abbreviated. For a full version of the declaration go to <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>







The brand imagery being used for Pacific Partnership is inspired by empowering female-specific tattoo motifs used in the Pacific. Termed *veiqia* in Fiji or *malu* in Samoa, these tattoos are believed to give shelter, strength and protection to young women, just as the Pacific Partnership aims to empower women, improve gender equality and end violence against women and girls. The Pacific Partnership's implementers respectfully acknowledge that these symbols were traditionally only marked on women, and are empowering and reflect heritage, tribe, identity and strength. For details about female tattooing in the Pacific Islands, for example in Fiji, there are projects such as The Veiqia Project creative research project inspired by the practice of Fijian female tattooing: [www.theveiqiaproject.com](http://www.theveiqiaproject.com).

Front cover art: Arindra Nath Sukul (Red Cave Arts) © 2020, Fiji. Rising Tide.  
Medium: Acrylic on canvas

Back cover art: Regina Shiki © 2019, Fiji. Love. Medium: Digital art



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